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# Exploring Veterans' Experiences In Engl-101 At Southern Illinois University-Carbondale

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EXPLORING VETERANS' EXPERIENCES IN ENGL-101 AT SOUTHERN ILLINOIS  
UNIVERSITY-CARBONDALE

by

John Edward Gund

B.S., Southern Illinois University, 2012  
A.S., John A. Logan Community College, 2010  
A.A., John A. Logan Community College, 2010

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Arts in English

Department of English  
in the Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
August 2015

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THESIS APPROVAL

EXPLORING VETERANS' EXPERIENCES IN ENGL-101 AT SOUTHERN ILLINOIS  
UNIVERSITY-CARBONDALE

By

John Edward Gund

A Thesis Submitted in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Master of Arts  
in the field of English

Approved by:

Ronda L. Dively, Chair

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June 8, 2015

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

John Edward Gund, for the Master of Arts degree in English, presented on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: EXPLORING VETERANS' EXPERIENCES IN ENGL-101 AT SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY-CARBONDALE

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Ronda Dively

In recent years, an increasing number of military veterans have enrolled in higher education. Little research has been conducted on veterans in tandem with higher education, but what does exist shows that they are a unique student population because of their military background. In the last few years, scholarship has called for research on veterans in classroom environments. Moreover, composition scholars in particular have called for research on veterans and writing. Although veterans have been recognized as a unique student population, little research has been conducted on what pedagogical practices can be used to help them as they become students. First-year composition courses are the perfect context to examine the intersection of these calls for research because most veterans have to take them – since they often enroll as freshmen – and they involve varied written assignments.

The purpose of this study was to explore what veterans' experiences had been in the classroom environment of first-year composition courses and in working towards the course goals for written assignments through qualitative methods. This study also sought to discover what veterans thought could be altered to improve their experience in first-year composition. This study focused on the context of Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, and its first-year composition course, Engl-101. In order to discover what veterans' experiences had been, a focus group of five veterans that had taken Engl-101 at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale was held. Additionally, a follow-up interview was conducted with one of the participants of the focus group.

The results were consistent with the findings of other research on veterans. What was most notably clear was that veterans' experiences in Engl-101 were greatly influenced by their experiences in the military. Participants expected their instructors to wield more authority over the class, much like their superiors would in the military. Additionally, veterans were often challenged by the behaviors of non-military students, which they perceived as disrespectful. Despite these challenges that participants encountered in the classroom environment, they also drew from the leadership skills they acquired while in the military to counter them. Additionally, the participants of this study raised that their instructors cared about the students and the content of the course, which alleviated some of the challenges they encountered. When it came to working towards the course goals for the written assignments, veterans struggled to expand their ideas beyond a few sentences, largely due to the style of writing they were used to in the military. That said, once veterans had a clear understanding of the conventions needed for an assignment, they were able to write strong essays. Ultimately, instructors of first-year composition that work with veterans will need to further training on the expectations that veterans' carry with them from the military. Once instructors have knowledge of the ways veterans learn, they can adapt their pedagogical practices to suit.

## DEDICATION

First, this project is dedicated to the people that serve and have served in the military.

Second, this project is dedicated to my first-year composition instructor Kathleen Carl.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all of the people that agreed to participate in this study. Despite their busy schedules as students, they took the time to share their experiences with me.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Addressing the particular needs of different student populations in first-year composition (FYC) is a primary and ongoing concern in the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition. Much research has been dedicated to developing composition pedagogy for students who are basic writers, students whose first language is not English, and students with various cultural differences. Along these lines, in recent years, there has been an increasing call to action from composition scholars and institutions of higher education for there to be more research on military veterans, many of which take FYC during their initial semester. This call for more research is closely connected with the continual growth of veteran populations at institutions of higher education using the benefits offered through the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which builds off of previous GI Bills. Despite the rise in research, Sue Doe and Lisa Langstraat point out in *Generation Vet*, a collection of composition scholarship on military veterans, that “rarely does student-services scholarship address veteran’s literacy practices or rhetorical strategies, and rarely do literary studies address *student-veterans’ presence in our classrooms* and the *pedagogical approaches* that may facilitate their learning” (2, emphasis added). Although the research that has focused on veterans and higher education in general has shed light on their needs as a student population, I concur with Doe and Langstraat that we need further examination of veterans in classes so that we can grow our understanding, and by extension, our pedagogy.

A main reason for augmenting research on veterans<sup>1</sup> in education is the recent and continued increase of their enrollment in higher education. Since the Post-9/11 GI Bill was passed on July 1, 2008, roughly 2 million veterans have enrolled in higher education, using those benefits (Radford iii). Of the approximately 4 million men and women who “have served in the active-duty military at some point in the 10 years since 9/11,” and the “thousands more” that “join their ranks each month” (Morin, “A Profile” 76), many do not have a college education. Given the benefits available to veterans and the fact that many join the military specifically for them, it is reasonable to assume that more veterans will enroll in higher education in upcoming years.

### **Understanding Veterans as a Unique Student Population**

Although it would be “at our own peril” that we would “oversimplify and homogenize veterans’ identities, values, and literacy experiences” (Doe and Langstraat 23), veterans do share numerous similarities that set them apart from the more common traditional student<sup>2</sup>, similarities that call for a greater understanding of how teachers can effectively address their needs. Because of the similarities that veterans share as a student population, “it is probable that veterans will substantially transform postsecondary classroom dynamics, relationships across campus and in the community, and our understanding of the kinds of literacies students bring to our courses” (Doe and Langstraat 2). As this relatively new group of students continues to grow the diversity of student populations, many institutions of higher education are trying to figure out the best way

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this research, I use veterans to refer to *all* students that have been a part of the military, in addition to those that still currently serve. When I am discussing those that are still in the service, I will refer to them as servicemembers.

<sup>2</sup> Whenever I refer to “traditional students,” I mean to say students that have just graduated high school and have immediately begun college. I recognize that “traditional students” by this definition is no longer the norm, but in the context of this research, the majority of freshman enrolled fit this definition.

to help them transition from military service to student life. Moreover, there has been an increasing need to understand how veterans are engaging in core courses, specifically FYC.

There are many aspects of military service that make veterans a distinct student population. Veterans tend to struggle with the cultural differences between military contexts and academic contexts, which may be due to the significant gap between veterans' high school education and higher education, given that nine-in-ten of veterans are high school graduates (Morin, "A Profile" 85) and that between 2000 and 2009, less than 35% of veterans had some college education (Holder 4). Additionally, student-veterans, according to the American Council on Education (ACE), are "more likely" to be first-generation college students, married, and have at least one dependent (qtd. in "Basic Training" slide 16). They tend to carry more responsibility than many traditional students, especially as they balance "home-life" and get reacquainted with civilian life (Doe and Langstraat 13; Hart and Thompson, "Reacting" par. 24). Moreover, other research suggests that traditional students' and teachers' perspectives – especially perspectives of those who believe war is immoral – could affect veterans' return to education by creating conflict within the classroom (Ackerman, DiRamio, and Mitchell 11; Crawley 21-2; Rumann, Rivera, and Hernandez 55; Wheeler 784). On a more positive note, numerous studies have noted that veterans possess strengths that could be advantageous to themselves and to the members of their classes: these strengths range from skills in leadership and group-cohesion to a greater sense of responsibility and motivation (Hart and Thompson, "An Ethical" 4; Martin 30; Wheeler 782).

As a result of these initially identified trends in student-veterans' transitions into education, there is plenty of debate on how to best integrate and educate them in FYC courses, yet there is little research that focuses specifically on them in that context. Most research

regarding student-veterans examines the overall transition from combat to college or how various mental disabilities gained from military service affect their educational experience, yet the number of veterans who have served in combat and have mental disabilities are not in the majority of the military population. The one consensus in research is that we must figure how to best serve veterans, but this question is complicated by the challenge that their unique perspectives and experiences can simultaneously aid and hinder their educational progress.

### **Damaging Stereotypes – Understanding Diversity Within the Military**

Although veterans can be viewed as a unique population, they possess many personal differences and histories that “precede and exceed the military” (Hadlock and Doe 79). Recognizing the diversity of veterans’ experiences within the military is a “vital step” in helping them as students (Morrow and Hart 35) and working towards useful generalizations. Moreover, we must dispel the stereotypes because they can also be harmful. Unfortunately, of those who have no experience in or with the military, little is known about how it works or what veterans’ lives are like. In a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, Paul Taylor and Rich Morin found that “84% of modern-era veterans say that the American public has little or no understanding of the problems that those in the military face” (8). Given that many, if not most, instructors of FYC and traditional students have no military experience, it is no surprise that many more “post-9/11 veterans (44%) than pre-9/11 veterans (25%) say that their readjustment to civilian life has been difficult” (Taylor and Morin 10). Student-veterans are going into classrooms where little is known about them beyond over-advertised conceptions of “heroes,” “warriors,” “killers,” and persons “disabled” by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). These overly stereotyped conceptions of veterans have not yet

been dispelled, and perhaps this is largely due to the lack of research. These stereotypes are not based on complete falsehoods; they are based on minority populations within the military.

Consider the words of a veteran enrolled in FYC: “I guess [that being a veteran is] just like any other group, whether it is women, minorities, religion, veterans, you know, you kind of want to be like, ‘Yeah, I’m a veteran . . . but I’m also all these other things” (Hadlock and Doe 88).

One of the most common assumptions made about veterans is that they have PTSD, when the reality is that only 11% percent of veterans from the war in Afghanistan and 20% of veterans from the war in Iraq are affected, according to the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) (“PTSD” par. 7). Additionally, TBIs, which are largely due to concussions caused by the blast of explosives, have recently been considered the “signature wound” of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although some veterans are affected by these conditions, it is a minority population within the military. Moreover, these assumptions are grounded in another assumption about veterans: that they have served in combat and that they were stationed in the Middle East. The reality is that a large number of veterans have never seen combat. A large number of veterans serve at bases far away from any combat and the Middle East.

Another way in which veterans cannot easily be generalized is that there are many ways in which they can serve within the military. Veterans can be from one of the four military branches (Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy), can hold numerous ranks over the course of their service, and can be from various bases and deployments. Quite frankly, there are so many combinations and permutations of ranks, deployments, and roles within the military, it would be almost impossible to isolate one group of veterans who are the same beyond their general military service.



In addition to the plethora of positions that a servicemember can hold, diversity in military populations results from an increasing rise of racial minorities and women in the military, a number that has traditionally remained low. Morin notes that “The percentage of racial minorities in the ranks of officers and enlisted personnel has increased significantly since 1990. In 2009, more than a third of all active-duty personnel were minorities (36.2%), an increase from 25.4% about two decades ago” (“A Profile” 80). Moreover, Morin notes that there is a consistent, general increase of women actively involved in various ranks in the military (“A Profile” 79). When one considers the diversity of ranks, deployments, and training in combination with the diversity of the servicemembers, it becomes apparent how complicated it is to make a generalization about them as students. We must, as Ann Shivers-McNair argues, find a balance between providing “common ground and solidarity for our student-veterans” while also recognizing “the diversity and difference within this demographic” (Shivers-McNair 230).

### **The Effects of the Post-9/11 GI Bill**

In order to understand why so many veterans are enrolling in higher education, some information regarding the benefits they receive must be considered. Educational benefits for military service were first offered after World War II, when the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act – more commonly known as the GI Bill – provided money for a variety of veterans’ needs. Today there are numbers of education benefit packages available that add to the benefits provided by the original GI Bill, but the most widely used is the Post-9/11 GI Bill. According to the VA, “The Post 9/11 GI Bill is the most comprehensive education benefit package since the original GI Bill of Rights was signed into law in 1944. This education benefit became effective August 1, 2009” (“Education” 3). The VA provides up to “36 months of education benefits,

generally payable for 15 years following” a veteran’s “release from active duty” (“Post 9/11 GI Bill” par. 5). To illustrate how much these benefits have impacted veterans’ enrollment in education, consider that in 2009, when it was first offered, only 34,393 veterans were using the Post-9/11 benefits (VA “Education” 8). From 2012 to 2013, the use of the Post-9/11 GI Bill rose 17%, from 646,302 users to 754,229 users (VA “Education” 8). As more veterans return from their service, it is possible that more will use and depend on the benefits available to them to acquire a degree. Although the use of these benefits are not the only motivating factor to enroll in education, it is a significant one<sup>3</sup>.

These benefits are one of the reasons that many people sign up for military service. Alexandria Radford describes in a report that “Military undergraduates can find it difficult to finance their education” (vi), which is another reason why many utilize the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Many veterans depend solely on the money provided by these benefits to pay for their tuition, housing, and other living expenses, which is likely due to the fact that many of them are young and have no college education. In a VA study conducted by Westat, it was found that 66.8% of veterans were using VA education and training benefits “After active duty service” while 29.6% used their benefits “Both during and after active duty service” (226). Many veterans wait until they have finished their service in the military so that they can focus on education and other life goals. A low percentage of men and women in the military have some college education, 31.9% and 43.4%, respectively (Holder 5). Additionally, only 16.3% of men and 21% of women in the military have a Bachelor’s degree (Holder 6). The low percentage of veterans with degrees in higher education indicates that there are many who are either currently in education or may potentially enroll using the benefits available to them.

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<sup>3</sup> While many rely on Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, there are many veterans that enroll in education and do not use them.

## **The Need for – and Challenges of – Researching Veterans**

Veterans often do not wish to be known in the classroom, making it hard for teachers to address their needs, let alone research them. Hart and Thompson speak to this issue of veterans' not wanting to be known, arguing that "faculty may be unaware of the veteran students in their classes and, therefore, may unwittingly be inattentive to those students' needs, as these 'invisible' veterans may be reluctant to seek additional help and/or may have some difficulty relating to classmates" (Hart and Thompson, "An Ethical" 5). Even if teachers are aware of the veterans in their classrooms, it is likely that they have been trained in sessions "based on a deficit model" that focused on the "'signature wounds' of the current wars .... and the challenges student-veterans face in making the transition from service to college" (Hart and Thompson, "An Ethical" 4). Although these training sessions are well-intentioned, they do little in the manner of helping teachers help veterans transition into civilian and student life. Typically, teachers are either unaware that veterans are in their classes or they have a very limited view of their needs. In both cases, the veterans are disserved. Additionally the limited view of veterans' needs as students has also been the subject of great interest in scholarly research while only a small amount of research examines veterans beyond their deficits.

Ultimately, researchers, instructors, and writing program administrators (WPAs) must be acutely aware of the distinctions between veterans and other students while not assuming that the minority experiences of the military – like combat or suffering from an injury – are the majority. What we do know, based on limited research, is that veterans, because of their military background, have the potential to alter the environment of a classroom for better or worse. Yet, the issues that veterans face in the classroom remain largely understudied. This skew in research makes it challenging to find a starting point for addressing their needs, which is why more

qualitative and general inquiry is necessary. In the midst of various calls for considerations of methods and strategies on how to serve veterans (Ackerman, DiRamio and Mitchell 13; Carrow, Rynell, and Terpstra 11), Angie Mallory and Doug Downs argue that we “need a better awareness of veterans’ different expectations for what constitutes appropriate student-faculty interaction and teaching. Such awareness influences pedagogy, particularly in terms of feedback supporting such interaction” (52). Karen Persky and Diane Oliver also speak to this same call, claiming that “as more research is focused on the education of veterans, and as colleges respond to veterans in unique and compelling ways, gateways for promising practices and expanding opportunities will open” (119). Considered in the opposite way, there are opportunities that have not yet opened to benefit veterans in higher education because of how little research has been conducted.

Many other scholars have recognized this concern and call for further research on veterans, research that will explicitly inform pedagogical and classroom practices (Doe and Langstraat 2; Hadlock and Doe 73; Rumann, Rivera, and Hernandez 54). This call is crucial given that Patricia Brown and Charles Gross contend that the approaches behind teaching veterans have “often been more ad hoc than strategic” (45). Moreover, Radford poses this question for “Campus Leaders” in a report, but it still seems largely unanswered: “Have faculty and staff been trained to understand and recognize the specific needs and concerns of past and current military personnel?” (23). In order for there to be pedagogically sound training for instructors, we must have a good foundation of knowledge undergirding it.

*Increasing Interest from Rhetoric and Composition Scholars*

Beyond the general calls for research of veterans in classroom settings, there has been a growing interest amongst composition scholars to research veterans in composition courses, especially FYC. Instructors, WPAs, and others who work with veterans and their writing must consider how to best help them – something that we must all do, as Marilyn Valentino, in her 2010 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) address, poses : “How can we build relationships – connect one-to-one – to help *all* students invest more fully in writing” (365)? Although instructors, WPAs, and others are fairly experienced in working with students from a wide range of racial, cultural, religious, economic, and social backgrounds, most are unaware of the veterans in their classrooms, their programs, and the resources available to them (Hart and Thompson, “An Ethical” 4). We have not fully considered the needs that this particular student population has when we consider the amount of research that has been dedicated to other student populations. Hart and Thompson speak to the broadening of our understanding of our students, suggesting that we should consider a veteran audience when crafting assignments, just as we would consider “race, gender, and religious background” (Hart and Thompson, “An Ethical” 12). But, in order to make such considerations, we must first have a general understanding of veterans’ perceptions of composition and the common elements of the FYC classroom.

More recently, community college instructor Howard Tinberg, in his 2014 CCCC Chair address, challenges us to “direct our full and undivided attention” to the writers in our classrooms “*as they are*, not as we simply believe them to be” in his larger call for us to “reconstruct our work as a public good” (332). We must examine veterans as individuals, with and apart from their service in the military, while also seeking to discover what sets them apart

as a unique student population. We also must examine them in the context in which we are teaching them. Beyond Tinberg's broader call to action, and due to studies that indicate that first-year postsecondary dropout rates for veterans is relatively high at 48.3%<sup>4</sup> (Zoroya par. 5), Hart and Thompson encourage "WPAs, writing center directors, and writing instructors" to "investigate ways in which they can facilitate the success of student-veterans, in particular, in their first year of college" ("An Ethical" 14). This call to action by Hart and Thompson was funded by a CCCC research grant, which illustrates the growing recognition that veterans are valued as a student population. Other rhetoric and composition scholars have called for more research on this issue (Hadlock and Doe 73; Hinton, "Front" 257).

What then should we do to discover what will help veterans succeed in FYC and their first semester of college? Hart and Thompson "recommend that each institution consider its local context as it develops strategies for responding ethically to its student-veteran population" while we consider our "'ethical obligations' to student-veterans" ("An Ethical" 14). Indeed, Corrine Hinton argues that "Only recently have we started to learn about the experiences and perceptions of student-veterans in undergraduate composition courses and the importance of considering these experiences and perceptions within the context of previous learning and writing interactions in the military" (Hinton, "Front" 257). Although much research has discussed veterans and their experiences with writing narratives (Burdick 353; De La Ysla 96; Holladay 374-5; Leonhardy 350; Martin 27-8; Thompson 200), little has actually been done to understand veterans and writing in general beyond the landmark book *Generation Vet* by Doe and Langstraat and a special issue of *Teaching English in the Two Year College*. Moreover, little research has been done to help inform instructors of composition about the veterans that are

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<sup>4</sup> This is one of the most positive estimates I've seen. I've seen references to dropout rates ranging from 30% to 80%.

often in their classrooms. We must not only consider the FYC context that veterans are learning in, but we must also consider the contexts that they are coming from and how those intersect and interact with those of other students. The research project presented in this thesis seeks to do just that. Through asking veterans to collectively share their experiences in and out of the classroom, I hope to add to the increasing understanding of veterans “as they are” as students and as writers.

### **Importance of FYC to Student-Veterans**

FYC plays a pivotal role in the success of college freshman, which makes it an important context to discover how it can be used to help veterans succeed (Doe and Langstraat 3). Although the structure and content of FYC varies from institution to institution, there are numerous commonalities that make it a crucial resource to veterans. First, it supplies all students, including veterans, with the rhetorical skills and strategies necessary to critically evaluate and compose texts within the context of an academic community. Second, sections of composition are typically capped at relatively low numbers; the size allowing for closer relationships to develop amongst students and between students and teachers than tends to occur in larger classes. In addition to its small class size, FYC exposes all students to numerous ideas, experiences, and perspectives through the heterogeneous population within it. Furthermore, FYC prepares students for the writing conventions of an academic discourse community. Almost all freshmen have to take FYC, unless they’ve tested out of it or they’ve taken an advanced placement high school course. In the midst of the diverse student population of FYC, veterans often stand apart simply because of the difference in age between them and the majority of first-year students. Moreover, because FYC utilizes class discussions, peer-reviews, and other student-centered activities that move authority into students’ hands, veterans may be unsure of

how to engage in these activities, especially since the methods of teaching used in the military are different. The FYC context is unlike the military in that there aren't clearly prescribed rules for interacting with peers and instructors as there are in the military. The hierarchies that veterans are used to are often displaced by the academic's challenge of authority. FYC then has the potential to serve as an introduction to academia, its culture, and the conventions of writing that they will need for their education.

Despite the important role that FYC can play in introducing student-veterans to academia and its writing conventions, there is little research on it. Although great strides have been made in the last few years, the majority of research on veterans focuses on one of the following topics: 1) how veterans' experiences with writing for the military for the military affects their writing outside of the military; 2) how the culture of the military influences veterans experiences as students; and 3) how PTSD/TBI – or combat experience – affects veterans' transition into education. Almost no research exists on veterans within the classroom environment. Moreover, almost no research examines veterans and genres typically present in FYC. In order to add to the growing body of research on veterans, this study gathered data through a focus group and a follow-up interview with veterans that have taken Engl-101 – an FYC course – at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale to answer the following research questions:

1. What have veterans' experiences been within the classroom environment of Engl-101 at SIUC?
2. What have veterans' experiences been in working towards the course goals for the written assignments of Engl-101 at SIUC?



3. What practices could be used in and out of Engl-101 at SIUC - as well as in other FYC courses - to help improve veterans' experiences in developing their academic writing skills?

### **Preview of Upcoming Chapters**

Now that a brief introduction to veterans has been provided, a more in-depth examination of recent research on veterans will be provided in the Chapter 2. Chapter 2 will focus on the key themes in veteran research that frequently arise and how they relate to FYC. Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology behind this study, in addition to giving more contextual information on the course goals for written assignments and structure of Southern Illinois University-Carbondale's FYC, Engl-101. Chapter 4 will discuss the findings of this study, and Chapter 5 will conclude with a discussion on the implications of the findings.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although there is a growing amount of scholarship on veterans in composition classrooms, the majority of educational research on veterans focuses on a broader understanding of their experiences, as well as their transition into higher education. Currently, we are experiencing the largest number of veterans enrolling in education since World War II, a number that will presumably continue to grow (Church 43). As more veterans enroll in higher education, research about them in first-year composition (FYC) is beginning to grow in tandem. What follows is an examination of the literature that is available about veterans: literature that addresses aspects of military experience and culture that can influence veterans' experiences with FYC assignments and with instructors and students in FYC classrooms. After that, a brief synthesis of literature on combat veterans and veterans with PTSD or TBI will be provided, along with observations about how these conditions might affect performance in FYC. Finally, this chapter will discuss the skills that veterans often acquire through military service that could be beneficial in the FYC context.

#### **Military Culture to FYC Culture – (Re)learning How to Write**

No research has argued that the FYC course needs to be radically redesigned for student-veterans, although there has been discussion of modifying current practices. Galen Leonhardy, a former Marine and a community college English instructor, argues that composition instructors “do not need to change what we do” in our composition classes to help veterans, “as long as our practice is supported by theory and research” (345). Yet, when Leonhardy wrote this in 2009, he was one of the first to publish an article on veterans' experiences in composition courses. Little

had been published on how veterans were actually interacting with FYC curricula at that time, and more veterans have enrolled in higher education since he wrote that landmark piece. Even though course objectives for FYC continue to focus largely on genre, audience, and process awareness, and the traditional curriculum still includes personal narrative, argumentative (opinion or position), research, informative genres (Holladay 371), little has been done to see what specific pedagogical practices might help veterans work towards them. Ultimately, to use Leonhardy's argument, composition instructors have to ground their practices in research, including research on how we instruct different student populations, like veterans, in writing. Even if that research would replicate prior findings, it would serve to reinforce what we already know.

As briefly discussed in Chapter 1, veterans come from a culture that is highly regimented and prescriptive. Practically every action a veteran makes is dictated through the orders of a superior or from a rule-book, which can lead to a mission-oriented or goal-oriented mentality. Angie Mallory, a navy veteran, and Doug Downs, an FYC pedagogy specialist, found through multiple interviews with military servicemembers that “when soldiers become students, their need for clearly defined missions, areas of responsibility, and orders linking the two does not abate” (63). In a similar vein, Robert Ackerman, David DiRamio, and Regina L. Garza Mitchell, in an article on combat veterans transitioning to college, also found that the transition from a highly structured life to a loosely structured one can often cause stress and anxiety for student-veterans (12). The need for clearly defined guidelines by veterans could negatively impact their approach to writing if prompts do not clearly state the objectives and expectations of the assignment. In addition, loosely-structured class activities could also negatively impact veterans because they do not understand the cultural expectations of FYC, like finding one's personal

voice, challenging the ideas of others, valuing process over product, and synthesizing multiple perspectives. The cultural expectation of completing a mission can leak into a veteran's approach to the curriculum of FYC, influencing the way he or she approaches the assignments that he or she is given by the instructor. Veterans may expect a more regimented class structure or for activities to have clear parameters in the classroom.

The goal-oriented focus that veterans are used to having in the military is completely different than the focuses demanded by classes, especially that of emphasizing the importance of the writing process. Although it does not apply to all veterans, many become masters of "professional forms of writing" within the context of their service (Hadlock and Doe 80). The writing conventions in the military are so prescriptive that veterans may not be accustomed to the freedom of expressing themselves within a broader framework. This stands in contrast with the number of students that have not mastered any particular form of writing beyond the five-paragraph essay. The fact that many veterans have this experience may be seen as a potential benefit for an FYC classroom, if they can learn how to transfer their skills. Unfortunately, as Corrine Hinton discovered with Marine student-veterans, some are "at odds with the expectations of academic writing" because they are used to the "direct, concise, informational style of military writing" ("Front" 268). This attitude may present a challenge to FYC instructors who often focus on process theories of composition that emphasize recursive review and require revisions and elaboration of claims. Many veterans may want to finish a paper "right" the first time they draft it because of the goal-oriented culture from which they come. At the same time, they may struggle with developing their ideas farther than a few pages because of the conventions to which they are accustomed. That said, Hinton also found that some of the Marines that she interviewed "credited their experiences with writing in the military as a catalyst

for embracing and integrating revising into their academic writing process” because they would have their supervisors provide them with feedback (“The Military” par. 20). Hinton’s research shows how veterans cannot be easily generalized by writing instructors. But what can be generalized is that if veterans have experience with writing in the military, it is likely that they had to master the conventions of those genres. Moreover, it is likely that they “learned how to communicate and how to express themselves in writing by reading and modeling their work after existing pieces considered acceptable” (Hinton, “Front” 269). Additionally, any writing done in the military would have to meet the highest standards of the conventions demanded. Veterans have an understanding of how to write, but they may not recognize how to transfer the skills they learned in the military to FYC. They may not realize that the processes that worked in the military could work for FYC, even if the conventions of the actual assignment are different.

The abrupt transition from military writing expectations to academic writing expectations may require some considerations to aid veterans. FYC instructors may seek to provide more sample essays or handouts with genre expectations to accommodate veterans’ learning needs. They may also need to provide outlines of the expected writing conventions within FYC. Additionally, instructors can encourage veterans to visit them during office hours to receive feedback – mimicking the convention of requesting a supervisor to examine a draft.

Although the shift in conventions from military writing to writing in FYC can be abrupt for veterans, there are cultural values that can be transferred to benefit veterans’ writing process. In Alexis Hart and Roger Thompson’s survey of 439 Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) and writing faculty, they found that most “who have taught veteran students tend characterize (sic) them as mature, serious students who seek frank, direct guidance as they develop as writers, but may be unfamiliar with or even resistant to academic writing conventions such as recursive

revision and peer review” (“An Ethical” 4). This hearkens back to the goal-focused writing conventions to which many student-veterans are accustomed, which can be viewed as a strength and not just a factor that can shorten their writing process. Holly Wheeler, an instructor of English and Philosophy at Monroe Community College, found through a case study that some veterans, unlike traditional students, approached assignments as a mission; “the same way they did in the service. First they planned the task, completed it to the best of their abilities, and learned from the outcome” (782). This proactive tendency, combined with the desire to gain something from the outcome of the process can be used to illustrate the importance of reflection in writing. What a veteran might consider as a “final” draft might be reconsidered in light of the process that he or she was used to in evaluation actions in the military. Hinton notes that this tendency to be proactive also comes through as teachers comment on drafts, to which veterans often express a “desire for more feedback on their course assignments, particularly from their instructors (“Front” 271). Feedback from instructors is typically taken very seriously by veterans, and they may seek it more often than the traditional student. This action of seeking more feedback from instructors paradoxically places more emphasis on revision than one might expect from a goal-focused orientation, which predominately emphasizes the value of a final product.

In addition to the research on how the cultural values veterans obtain from the military can affect their approaches to writing, there is also research on how veterans engage with narrative essays. FYC often includes a narrative genre, and it is likely that teachers will encounter the recounting of military experiences in some veterans’ work. Without providing any solid answers, community college instructor Sylvia Holladay questions how English teachers can “teach students who have been on the battlefield” and have “seen and experienced horrors” (369). For teachers without military experience, grading personal narratives about war and

military service can be challenging<sup>5</sup>. The emotional details of battle, death, and other experiences that student-veterans are willing to reveal in narratives can jar uninitiated instructors. The strategy of utilizing narrative genres in the classroom calls for a consideration of teachers' dispositions towards personal revelations. Melanie Brudick, a composition instructor at Metropolitan Community College, comments in a reflection on grading personal narratives that focus on war experiences that "I must overcome my fear and my despair at the tragedy" of war stories so that "students' voices can be heard" (354). In short, the strategy of utilizing narrative writing also requires careful consideration of teacher response. The narratives that veterans may choose to share in their writing provide opportunities for us to learn about our students, regardless of our beliefs about war and the military.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, most of the composition scholarship before the publication of *Generation Vet*, focused on veterans writing about their experiences in the military, typically in association with personal narratives. Although Holladay discovered that not all of her student-veterans wish to write about their military experience, some chose to utilize aspects of their experience in most of their writing if they had choice in the subject (374). Similarly, Burdick states that she always begins the semester with a narrative essay because she believes that "students write better when they write what they know; teachers should scaffold writing assignments a la Moffett—to enable students to move from what is emotionally close to them to more complex and seemingly faraway topics; narratives allow teachers to get to know their students and their students' writing in more multifaceted ways" (353). She believes that these military stories should be told, even if they are hard to write or hard to read (Burdick 354). Student-veterans are not, and should never be, forced to write about their experiences in the

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<sup>5</sup> As was discussed in Chapter 1, it is important to recognize that many veterans do not serve in combat. That said, many still have experiences that can be outside of an instructor's comprehension.

military, but if they choose to do so, it should be as valued as that which any other non-veteran student produces, even if it challenges an instructor emotionally or ethically. Leonhardy proposes that when a “vet is ready to write about a military experience, there is generally a sense of commitment to the process and the product” (339). This seems to suggest that student-veterans willing to write about their military experience may do better because they feel a greater sense of ownership over the product that they develop. The narrative genre may also be beneficial for veterans because it allows them to write about subjects about which they are experts. Leonhardy extends his argument for personal expression through daily journaling for all students (343). Again, although narrative genres are beneficial to all students, it does appear as if student-veterans may be more responsive to narrative writing than other genres that they encounter.

### **From the Military to the FYC Classroom**

As veterans enroll in classes for their first semester, specifically FYC, they can be surprised or jarred by the differing cultural values held by students and instructors. Doe and Langstraat discuss this in greater detail, arguing that “At the very least, writing courses are probable sites of significant cultural exchanges – even clashes – as veterans, whether they have been in combat or not, bring to our courses the values, rhetorical traditions, and communication styles they have learned in the military” (3). These cultural “clashes” can be beneficial to composition instructors seeking to show multiple perspectives, but student-veterans, traditional students, and instructors may need guidance on how to interact with each other. In a study on student-veteran’s feelings towards their classes, Holladay states that “the military students that I have talked with do not expect or want any special attention because of what they have gone through. However, most veterans do feel more mature and more informed than their classmates”



(376). Because of their experience in the military, veterans may have trouble understanding or accepting the opinions of traditional students because they feel that they are not grounded in experience. They may also struggle with any ignorance that a traditional student displays in class. Despite their wish to not receive “special attention,” in the classroom, it does seem that there is a need to improve classroom interactions to be more inclusive toward veterans because of the “clashes” that can occur.

One reason that veterans can struggle with the culture of the FYC classroom is that they are removed from the culture of their military unit. The people that they worked, slept, and perhaps even fought with are no longer by them. This can often be a rough experience considering that a veteran’s life in the service was constantly in the presence of his or her unit. Hadlock and Doe concisely describe the effect of group cohesion:

The process of military identity formation begins with induction through boot camp, which is structured so the servicemember rather quickly sheds a past identity of individuality and embraces the identity of the team unit. This new team-oriented identity need not be exclusive of other identities but is likely to have a formative and robust effect. (77)

When a veteran enters college, he or she is removed from that team-identity, which may cause him or her to feel isolated within the FYC context. FYC – and college in general – does not have the group cohesion to which veterans are accustomed. Even if they are eager to collaborate in FYC, there are no bonding practices as intense as the military possesses. Students in FYC are not eating, training, or working together outside of class. Because of this, it may be harder for veterans to connect and collaborate with other students. If FYC instructors can understand the experience that veterans have coming out of their service and into the classroom, they may be

able to harness their ability to participate as “team members,” helping them become part of a new kind of “unit.” By developing pedagogical strategies that allow veterans, and other students, to utilize leadership and collaborative skills in FYC, the greater the learning experience for everyone else in the class.

Another reason that veterans may struggle within the classroom of FYC is that many instructors do not have direct military experience that would help them understand their student-veterans. D’Vera Cohn and Cary Funk found in a survey of the general public that “When it comes to their armed forces, most Americans in the post-9/11 era have feelings of pride, gratitude and confidence,” yet most of them also “acknowledge they know little about the realities of military service. And, in increasing numbers, they disapprove of or do not pay attention to the wars the military is currently fighting” (59). In addition to this, veterans are often considered adult learners in composition scholarship, but “student-veterans’ former military workplace is generally less well understood by faculty and traditional students alike; hence, making pedagogical connections between the experiences of the military and civilian sectors as well as connections between social groups (across the veteran and nonveteran divide) can be challenging for faculty” (Doe and Langstraat 13). Because many teachers do not fully understand the needs and experiences of their student-veterans, Leonhardy argues that “composition instructors must first recognize that we have much to learn from veterans, just as much as we have much more to do for them” (340). In order to help veterans do well in FYC, we must understand what it is that they need and the culture from where they come. A non-student participant of Karen Persky and Diane Oliver’s research on student-veterans transitioning into community colleges argued that “many professors are not prepared, trained, or even necessarily inclined to want to consider that they have a group of learners in their classroom that learn

differently” (116). This participant’s argument seems to be rooted in the idea that veterans have a unique learning style that stems from their military experience. At the very least, veterans are used to learning a particular way in the military. This voice can be sobering to instructors, but it should also prompt them to take the time to understand the complexities of how military service can influence an individual, which in turn can influence the ways he or she interacts with others in a classroom.

In the context of the FYC classroom, most of the students, like the instructors, have no military background unless they have a family member in the service. Since FYC often centers on the idea of socially-constructed knowledge, it is likely that veterans will have numerous opportunities to share their perspectives that “will likely challenge the values and beliefs of not only traditional college students, but faculty as well” (Doe and Langstraat 3). FYC instructors have to consider how non-military students will interact with student-veterans and vice versa while adapting or modifying the curriculum to adjust to their needs. For instance, traditional students may need to be educated in interacting with student-veterans so that they do not ask insensitive questions like “Have you ever shot someone?” Likewise, student-veterans may need to be educated on how to respond to such questions. Because of the open-nature of many FYC classrooms, FYC instructors are in a unique position to help both traditional and military students grow in mutual understanding. Corey Rumann, Marisa Rivera, and Ignacio Hernandez discuss in a study about student-veterans in community colleges that non-veterans can “seek to understand” military experiences “in insensitive ways, which – while unintentional – has a potentially negative effect on student-veterans and their transitions” (55). Even if a non-military person seeks to understand military experiences in an appropriate manner, one Marine argues that ““You can’t relate unless you have been there”” (Ackerman, DiRamio, and Mitchell 11).

Because students typically struggle to relate to and understand student-veterans, there is often a feeling of disconnectedness between them, but especially on the part of the student-veterans. In her experience in teaching many veterans in English courses, Kristy Crawley discovered that many student-veterans “feel more mature than their classmates because of their travels and combat experiences” (23). Although there is no direct research that shows this feeling of disconnectedness in the composition classroom, it seems that there may be uncomfortable situations and discussions that arise in FYC as a result of the curriculum and even classroom practices. Since much research shows that student-veterans are uncomfortable in other classes in general, it may be reasonable to assume that the same is true in FYC.

#### *Coming to the Classroom from Combat*

In addition to the transition from military culture to academic culture, veterans that have experience in combat can have additional and often amplified struggles. Because the military requires volunteers, a lower number of people are involved than in the past when it was operated by the draft. Because there is a lower number of military members than when there was a draft, it is increasingly likely that veterans have had some kind of combat experience, as Rich Morin reveals that “Six-in-ten post-9/11 veterans (60%) say they served in a combat zone” (“Fighting” 40). Although Thomas Church argues that “It is impossible to generalize about the functional abilities or limitations of combat veterans due to the wide range of disabilities, diagnoses, and contributing factors” (44), there is some commonality in their experience that makes them worth examining collectively.

Combat veterans often have to make split-second decisions and take actions of which many traditional students have no conception. These decisions and actions can involve life and

death. Veterans can witness and experience a variety of physically, emotionally, and psychologically damaging experiences within combat that can make it harder for them to relate to traditional students. These unique experiences can be seen when Morin reports that “Despite technological and medical advances, war is still hell for the men and women who are asked to fight. Six-in-ten say they knew and served with someone who was seriously injured. About half served with someone who was killed” (“Fighting” 41). Additionally, “about one-in-six post-9/11 veterans (16%) report they were seriously injured while serving in the military, and most of these injuries were combat-related” (Morin, “Fighting” 40). These are experiences that are practically impossible to communicate with non-military persons. Additionally, many veterans enroll immediately after service, so these experiences are fresh in their minds. If veterans choose to disclose their combat service experiences, students and teachers may not know how to respond. As stated before, military experiences often make it especially hard for veterans to connect with other students in the classroom and with others on campus. In the case of combat veterans, those experiences can be even more foreign to non-military persons than general military service. Moreover, if these experiences are shared with non-military persons, it may offend or shock them. Although there may not be a reason for these experiences to be raised in class discussion, the experiences may still cause the veteran to feel isolated from the rest of the class.

One of the other elements of serving in combat that can make it hard for veterans to transition to a classroom setting is the loss of shared experiences and training. Serving in combat together forges tight bonds since each depends on the other on and off the battlefield (Church 47). To transition from an environment that has such a high emphasis on group cohesion and collaboration to an environment where there is significantly less collectivity may be jarring to veterans, even off-putting. Granted, many FYC classrooms implement collaborative activities,

but these activities are vastly different from those in the military. Cohesion in a group activity in FYC does not carry the weight of life or death that many combat veterans are used to experiencing in a military-related group activity. Collaborative activities in combat typically require careful execution to obtain a specific goal, whereas collaborative activities – such as invention exercises, small-group discussions on readings, and reflective exercises – in FYC tend to focus on what can be learned in the process of collaborating rather than the creation of a finished product. In short, collaborative activities typically employed in FYC classrooms are not designed to foreground and solidify intense, high-stakes bonding. In this sense, the nature of collaboration is not easily translatable from the context of FYC to the context of the military and vice versa. In addition, much of FYC is dedicated to finding a personal voice, expressing arguments, and challenging the ideas of others. This idea of challenging the ideas of others may be not be comprehensible to veterans. The culture of FYC can sometime move against a unifying vision. In some ways, this then can be a source of frustration for veterans.

### *Medical Concerns*

As mentioned before, only a minority of veterans suffer from PTSD and/or TBI, yet the subject is a common focus in research and in faculty training sessions. Hart and Thompson approach this issue effectively because they acknowledge differences of experience within the military that many fail to consider: we “need to be cautious about assuming that every veteran is affected, or affected in the same way” by PTSD and TBI (“Reacting Responsibly” par. 44). That said, a large number of veterans are affected by these conditions and there is some commonality in their experience. Kim Parker reports that “Among post-9/11 veterans who did not serve in combat, 30% say they had traumatic or distressing experiences over the course of their military

service” (51), while according to the Rand report, “a combined 31% of the deployed veterans surveyed reported either TBI, PTSD or depression, or a combination (7.3%)” (qtd. in Church 51). Although a fewer veterans are affected by one of these health conditions than those who are not, it is not a small number. Moreover, many student-veterans may be a part of this minority population within the military.

Although there are many different understandings of PTSD, ranging from its description of “temporary shellshock” to not being a “*real* disorder” (Barnard-Brak et al. 29), the reality is that it can negatively impact a veteran’s ability to work in and out of FYC. Church notes that the characteristics of PTSD include “irritability, angry outbursts, depression, hopelessness, hyper vigilance, social withdrawal, problems concentrating and survivor’s guilt” (48). To illustrate the potential issues that PTSD can cause within the classroom, consider the following example: a student dropping a book – causing a loud bang – might cause a veteran to react as if in combat or experience a “flashback” to the moment of trauma (Ackerman, DiRamio, and Mitchell 10). Granted, no individual has the exact same combination and experience with these symptoms, but each can negatively affect a veteran’s experience in the classroom and in writing.

Beyond the physical and psychological effects of PTSD, veterans can also be negatively impacted by the perceptions of their instructors. Many faculty and staff instructors do not realize the impact that their perceptions have on their student-veterans. In a quantitative study on faculty perceptions of student-veterans and PTSD, Lucy Barnard-Brak et al. discovered that the more negative the feelings towards military service that faculty members possessed, the more difficult it was to “put those feelings and perceptions aside” and “respect the service of veterans” (34). They argue further that as student-veteran populations at colleges increase, “a faculty or staff member’s attitude towards the military and PTSD may have an effect on the educational

outcomes of student-veterans with symptoms of PTSD” (Barnard-Brak et al. 34-5). Indeed, it is likely that the perceptions of teachers would affect student-veterans regardless of whether or not they had PTSD. Regarding FYC in particular, although it does not necessarily focus on issues pertaining to war and the military, it is often a context for discussion and debate regarding a wide range of topics. If war or military issues arose in discussion, veterans would quickly perceive the attitudes that instructors may have regarding them. Veterans may also pick up on these perceptions when they conference with their instructors. Additionally, if veterans choose to write an essay related to the military – which happens frequently – their instructors’ feedback may reveal negative perceptions.

Although PTSD is more commonly known than TBI, the latter is a growing concern for veterans that have served in Iraq and Afghanistan in the Post-9/11 era. The problem, as Tara Wood argues, is that “One of the trickiest aspects of working with student-veterans who have experienced TBI is the vast spectrum and severity of symptoms” (159). This broad range of symptoms can make it hard for instructors to identify the needs of each veteran. Church clarifies some of the symptoms on the spectrum, stating that TBI can cause a veteran to struggle with “judgment, attention, concentration... distraction, language abilities, sequencing... hearing, vision, orientation to space and time, balance, and pain sensitivity” (46). All of these symptoms/characteristics can have significant implications in the FYC classroom. For example, without note-taking, a veteran may forget what is discussed in class because his or her attention kept shifting to other things. Additionally, veterans may struggle to read assignments in class because they have trouble focusing, which could be embarrassing and frustrating to them. Moreover, oral feedback on papers may be quickly forgotten by veterans with one of these conditions if it isn’t written down by their instructors or a peer review partner. Practically every



interaction in and outside of the FYC classroom could be affected by the symptoms of PTSD and TBI. In any case, veterans with either of PTSD or TBI can have their performance negatively impacted in and outside of class. What must be understood is that these are medical issues that require support.

Despite the significance of these issues, there is no way to know for certain if a veteran has either of these conditions unless the student chooses to disclose that information. Leonhardy argues that although “current veterans do have cognitive needs that are similar to those of other students” they may have varying emotional and instructional needs that have been unaddressed (340). As a result, he believes that teachers should “make room” in class for “undocumented trauma,” which he describes as the unreported experiences that deeply affect the emotional, mental, and psychological state of a veteran (Leonhardy 343). These “undocumented traumas” may or may not be related to diagnosed PTSD or TBI. Although veterans may not disclose their struggles to their instructors, the instructors may be able anticipate the needs that they may have. What Leonhardy understands from first-hand experience is that student-veterans are often quiet about their military experiences, but triggers – like a loud noise – can cause veterans to react unexpectedly. For example, a veteran with PTSD, may respond to a student dropping a book by flipping up a table to create a defensible position. Granted, this is an extreme example. A milder response might be that the veteran has a panic attack because they are re-living the experience(s) that caused the PTSD. In either case, teachers must make room for the “undocumented trauma” that Leonhardy identifies.

### **Transferring Leadership and Collaborative Skills from the Military to FYC**

A growing amount of scholarship emphasizes that veterans have much to offer higher education. Student-veterans have been characterized as being “a potential campus resource” because of their unique leadership skills and experience in confronting and adapting to difficult challenges (Ackerman, DiRamio, and Mitchell 12). Hart and Thompson likewise argue in their research that “most faculty report high achievement among veterans, as well as a high sense of initiative, professionalism, and leadership” (“An Ethical” 4). Again, we must be careful not to assume that *all* veterans possess these qualities, but the research suggests that we can generalize this knowledge across the majority of those that have served in the military. The skills developed in the military that these veterans possess can be transferred to the context of FYC. Paul Taylor and Rich Morin report that out of 1,853 veterans, “Large majorities say that serving in the military has been either very or fairly useful in helping them become more mature (93%); gain self-confidence (90%); learn to work with other people (90%)” (11). With this knowledge, instructors can encourage veterans to apply the same skills they learned in service to the classroom setting. The level of responsibility that veterans possess can be used to encourage and even mentor other students. If teachers create an atmosphere of collaboration in the classroom, student-veterans can bring a new depth and texture to class discussion and activities like peer review. They can also serve in challenging the ideas of other students to get them to think more critically about their arguments. Moreover, veterans may be more responsive to constructive criticism because of their self-confidence and desire to improve themselves. These traits would undoubtedly be useful in the classroom setting if an inclusive and collaborative atmosphere could be set. The problem, as previously noted, is that veterans often struggle with the actual and perceived immaturity and ignorance of traditional students. In this sense, teachers of FYC must

consider what would bind the classroom together as a group. Unfortunately, little research exists on how to help veterans transfer these useful skills to the context of FYC.

### **Where to Go from Here**

As noted in this chapter and Chapter 1, a common finding in most of the research about veterans is that they struggle with the transition from the military to a civilian life in a variety of ways. In a survey of almost 2,000 veterans, Taylor and Morin found that “[A] relatively large share of modern-era veterans – 44% – reports that they have had difficulties readjusting to civilian life” (7). Beyond the struggle of the transition from military to civilian lifestyles, the transition into student life can pose its own additional challenges to veterans. Patricia Brown, dean for the Division of Educational Outreach at Western Carolina, and Charles Gross, director for military education, discuss the challenge of moving from military culture to academic culture in more detail, claiming that “Veterans returning to civilian life are often challenged by the adjustment in moving from a command and control environment to the openness of a college campus. They often feel isolated as one among many” (46). Although there is some scholarship on how this transition from one culture and environment to another would affect veterans as students – both positively and negatively – within the context of FYC, it is minimal. Most of the research that exists calls for more studies, precisely because so little is known about how veterans are engaging with FYC curriculums and with students. Current research suggests that instructors may have to adapt the way that they are teaching, but that research offers little guidance regarding what such adjustments might look like.

Despite the challenges that veterans face in transitioning from the military into school, recent research suggests that student-veterans also have much to offer to colleges and FYC. This

research has come primarily through the publication of articles in the journal *Teaching English in the Two Year College* and the book *Generation Vet*. Since student-veterans have a larger range of experiences than traditional students, it can be reasoned that they can offer unique perspectives and strengths to the classroom. Veterans tend to be aware of these strengths, as Parker found that most veterans view their military experience as something that has been advantageous to them, stating that “Overall, veterans report that their military experience has helped them get ahead in life. Two-thirds say it has helped them a lot, and 14% say it has helped a little” (49). For those that teach FYC or are Writing Program Administrators, an understanding of those strengths – and the challenges – can impact the way the FYC is taught and structured is crucial to their ability to help student-veterans. FYC instructors should be aware of the skills that veterans have so that they can help them utilize strengths for their own progress in the course and potentially for the benefit of the entire class. FYC may be able to help them transfer their skills and experiences in the military to the context of higher education and FYC. At the same time, FYC instructors must be aware of the common challenges and difficulties that veterans have coming into the FYC so that they can plan rather than react to issues that may arise.

## **Conclusion**

This study aims to fill the gap of research on veterans’ experiences within FYC classrooms, be it in their interactions with instructors, non-military students, or class activities and discussions. In addition, this study seeks to discover what their experiences have been in working towards the course goals for developing written products. The data gathered for this study was collected through a focus group and a follow-up interview so that veterans could personally voice their thoughts and experiences. The subsequent chapter will begin with the

research questions that guided the focus of this study and will describe the methodology that was used to seek answers to the research questions.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The study that is described in this chapter was conducted during the Spring 2015 semester at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale (SIUC). This study was approved by SIUC's Human Subjects Committee (HSC) in January 2015. The subjects of this study were military veterans<sup>6</sup> that had taken Engl-101, Composition I, at SIUC. Engl-101, a first-year composition course (FYC), is designed to provide "students with the rhetorical foundations that prepare them for the demands of academic and professional writing" ("Course Objectives" 3). The subjects participated in a focus group discussion during which they discussed their experiences within the Engl-101 classroom and in working towards the course goals for developing written products (which are described in greater detail below) through a series of open-ended questions (Appendix A). Based on the themes that arose in that focus group discussion, I created a list of further questions (Appendix B) which became the basis for a follow-up interview with one of the participants.

The purpose of this research was to answer the following questions:

1. What have veterans' experiences been within the classroom environment of Engl-101 at SIUC?
2. What have veterans' experiences been in working towards the course goals for the written assignments of Engl-101 at SIUC?
3. What practices could be used in and out of Engl-101 at SIUC - as well as in other FYC courses - to help improve veterans' experiences in developing their academic writing skills?

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<sup>6</sup> Participants were not asked whether or not that they were active duty. All that is known for certain is that they had all served in the past.

### **A Note on the Research Design**

The nature of this study is exploratory and qualitative. Using a focus group and an interview allowed me to discover emergent themes in the experiences of a limited number of veterans. This research study sought to uncover additional perspectives on the focal issues, thus raising questions for further research. Qualitative research allows for new interpretations and new discoveries because of its “multi-layered” nature (Ely et al. 21). As such, this research can be used to add to the growing amount of knowledge on veterans within FYC courses. Stephen North contends that we grow our knowledge and generate new ideas when we, as teachers, talk. He describes this idea in a hypothetical interaction with his audience of teachers sharing their stories: “Something in your story – not even, necessarily, what you thought was central – reminds me of something that I experienced, so I tell you about it. You are reminded in turn of something in your experience, and tell me; I tell about another experience, or reiterate the one already told with some variation, and so on” (North 32). Each addition to the conversation adds another “layer” to the meanings present while allowing for new interpretations, giving it increasingly richer textures. The study described herein is a presentation of my experience conducting the focus group and interview referenced above, in addition to being a presentation of my observations of participants’ actions through both the video recordings and partial transcripts, all of which is intended to add to the conversation on veterans taking FYC courses. Ultimately, the results of this study are intended to spark ideas in others for further investigation while simultaneously building on the existing knowledge base.

The nature of sharing stories that North presents in the context of teachers talking with other teachers can also be applied to the very structure of a focus group. As each participant speaks, it can spark a memory in another participant, perhaps even unrelated to the comments

made. This allows for everyone to share his or her personal experiences, thus building an increasingly wider base of knowledge and understanding. Some “guideposts” for developing “worthwhile” qualitative research include writing that “shares the complexity and feel of what was studied rather than simplifies meaning” and “is more close than distant, more personal than impersonal” (Ely et al. 381). The questions posed in the focus group and in the follow-up interview do not seek “simplified meaning”; they seek to broaden the complexity of our understanding of veterans within composition. Focus groups and interviews also allow for a far more personal understanding participants’ experiences than that of a survey or a questionnaire. Both of those methods for gathering data require interpersonal communication, allowing for nonverbal actions to be recorded and connected to the broader discussion. Moreover, focus groups and interviews allow for clarification to be sought when a response is confusing. Additionally, they allow for participants to raise issues that may have not been anticipated.

In sum, Margot Ely et al. contends that “One of the most fascinating – and sometimes frightening – aspects of qualitative research is its emergent nature. Nowhere is this more evident than during the interwoven process of writing and recursive analysis” (175). The data presented in the upcoming chapter is a presentation of the emergent themes found through this recursive analysis. Because of the multi-layered nature of qualitative data, Ely et al. argue that researchers must “rebel against finding answers” by constructing a “momentary version of the data” in order to “move forward” (21). As Ely et al. argues, the findings of this study cannot be viewed as absolute and final “answers” to the questions posed, but they can be viewed as a stepping stone to a greater understanding of veterans’ experiences in FYC courses and their engagement with writing.



### **Description of SIUC's Engl-101**

This study sought to discover what veterans' experiences have been in Engl-101 at SIUC, which is a public, open admission, research-university. Students are typically required to take Engl-101 at SIUC, although there are a few exceptions. The most common exceptions include taking an equivalent of Engl-101 at another accredited school, taking a proficiency test, or taking an advanced placement equivalent to the course while in high school. Engl-101 is an introduction to rhetorical concepts, writing strategies, and academic writing conventions. The course utilizes a standardized syllabus (Appendix C) and requires a total of six essays (Appendix D).

To be more specific, there are four major essays assigned throughout the semester and a timed essay as the final exam. Additionally, there is a portfolio at the end of the semester that requires the revision of three of the four major essays. The portfolio requires a reflective introduction to the collection, which counts as one of the six essays for the course. Each essay is a different genre addressed to a different audience, but all the essays are in some way required to touch upon the course theme assigned for the semester. This thematic design allows for further commonality between sections. Course themes in recent semesters include "Civility," "Natural Disasters," "Water," and "Sustainability."

Engl-101 is designed to help students move from writing to an informal audience of their peers in creative non-fiction to an academic audience in a review of literature pertinent to the course theme. Additionally, the course requires students to engage in analysis of personal experiences, visual texts, and written texts. The first essay is a literacy narrative in which students write about a single moment or event that caused them to gain some kind of literacy. This essay is addressed to their peers, so they are allowed numerous liberties that would not typically be allowed in an academic venue. The second essay is an analysis of an advertisement,

which is intended to help students utilize more analytical and evaluative skills than the first essay while addressing a more formal audience. The third essay then requires students to analyze the rhetorical choices of an author in a specific article while addressing an academic audience. The fourth essay requires students to gather a number of sources and synthesize them for an academic audience. The portfolio then requires students to revise the second essay and two others of their choice, while also requiring a reflective introduction that discusses what they learned – or didn't – during the process of revision. The final exam is a rhetorical analysis of an article like the third essay, but it must be written in a two hour period. All together, these essays (see table 1, below) expose students to a wide variety of genres, audiences, and conventions.

Table 1

## Engl-101 Unit Essay Descriptions

<b>Unit Essays</b>	<b>Description (from the common course syllabus of Fall 2013-Spring 2014)</b>
Unit 1 – Literacy Narrative	For an audience of your 101 class, you will narrate and address the significance of an experience in which you learned the literate practices of a given field or community and, as a result, gained access to that field or community.
Unit 2 – Advertisement Analysis	For a business audience, you will compose a report that evaluates the effectiveness of a given advertisement in the context of the magazine in which it appears.
Unit 3 – Summary/Rhetorical Analysis	For an academic audience, you will summarize an article to be assigned by your instructor, as well as critique the rhetorical strategies employed by the article's author.
Unit 4 – Literature Review (Synthesis)	For an academic audience, you will synthesize information from various sources about a controversial or debatable issue as designated by your instructor.
Unit 5 – Reflective Introduction to Portfolio	With attention to course readings and activities, as well as to the contents of your portfolio, you will compose an essay, targeted for readers in Engl-101, that discusses your development as a writer during Engl-101.
Unit 6 – Rhetorical Analysis (Final Exam)	For an academic audience, you will summarize an article to be assigned by your instructor, as well as critique the rhetorical strategies employed by the article's author.

One of the core elements of this course is its emphasis on revision. Students often do free-writing and brainstorming exercises before writing a significant portion of each essay.

Students also engage in peer reviews and the submission of drafts to their instructors before turning in the final draft for each unit. With each submission, students are required to engage in reflective exercises that will help them when they construct the reflective introduction for the portfolio. The portfolio allows them to revise their major essays even further than the previous drafts. Students are encouraged to reflect on the writing processes they used to accomplish each assignment while also considering the kinds of feedback that they received during each stage of drafting – utilizing the analytic and synthetic skills they've been developing over the duration of the course.

Engl-101 is also typically the smallest class that freshman take their first semester at SIUC since it is capped at 20 students per section. Most other classes taken during the first semester of students' freshmen year at SIUC are larger lectures with breakout discussion groups. Because of this, each section of Engl-101 involves much more personal interaction between the students and the teacher than others. Through class discussions, peer reviews, and other collaborative activities, students will likely share their opinions and experiences with others. It is this structure that allows Engl-101 the potential to be a class where students create relationships with other students throughout the semester. It also allows students to connect with their instructors more easily than they would in the lecture-based courses that they take.

The course goals of Engl-101 are varied, but they can all be seen as foundational to the academic writing conventions that will be expected of students in their future classes, regardless of their major. Although the goals have been revised slightly over the years as different people have directed the Writing Studies Program, the main focus of each remains intact. The course goals are the broader expectations for the course. Each essay requires additional expectations specifically related to the genre, audience, and context. Collectively, the course work serves to

demonstrate students' ability to reach these course goals (see table 2, below), in addition to showing students' growth, or lack thereof, as a writer.

Table 2

## Engl-101 Course Goals

<b>Course Goals (from the Fall 2013 – Spring 2014 common course syllabus)</b>
Generate effective compositions using various methods for critical thought, for the development of ideas, for the arrangement of those ideas to achieve a specific rhetorical goal, for the application of an appropriate style, and for the revision and editing.
Demonstrate understanding of the ways that language and communication shape experience, construct meaning, and foster community.
Analyze and describe rhetorical contexts and use such descriptions to increase the efficacy of communicative acts.
Analyze and use forms and conventions of academic writing, particularly the forms and conventions of argumentative and analytical writing.
Produce texts that demonstrate an understanding of how purpose, process, subject matter, form, style, tone, and diction are shaped by particular audiences and by specific communicative constraints and opportunities.
Understand the importance of research to writing, explain the kind of research required by different kinds of writing, and compose effective texts by judiciously using field research, library resources, and sources retrieved from electronic media.
Employ critical reading and listening as forms of invention.
Efficiently compose reading and lecture notes that are concise and clear.
Synthesize different and divergent information, using the integration of information from sources to engage in critical discourse.
Use Edited American English appropriately.

Sections of Engl-101 are taught by a wide variety of instructors, but they are typically Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) from the English Department. However, because of the

standardized syllabus and essay requirements, there is considerable consistency between sections of Engl-101. Additionally, the GTAs that teach Engl-101 go through an intensive Pre-Semester Workshop (PSW) each Fall semester. During PSW, various methods of instruction are taught and practiced. GTAs also go through grade-norming sessions to see how their grading practices align with others teaching Engl-101. Although the teaching style of each GTA may vary, the expectations for student performance is generally consistent.

### **Selection and Description of Participants**

This study focused on veterans that had taken – or were currently taking – Engl-101. Paul Copeland, the Director of the Veterans Services office at SIUC, granted permission to use a Veterans Services Listserv that contacts all active and inactive servicemembers that have attended or are currently attending SIUC. The email described the study and requested those willing participate to email me through my school email account (Appendix E). Veterans' email responses to this call for participation served as their informed consent. The veterans contacted were from a wide variety of ranks, branches, and experiences. The veterans that participated had to be either a current or former member of the military. In addition, they needed to have taken Engl-101 specifically at SIUC. No other requirements were given. It is also important to note that veterans that had me as an instructor were excluded from the study so as to avoid skewing an honest reflection of their experience. Originally, I was going to limit the requirements of participation to veterans that had taken Engl-101 within the last two years, but because of the limited number of respondents, I had to broaden that time frame.

As was discussed in Chapter 1, there is immense diversity within military culture and the people that comprise it. To focus this research on veterans of a specific branch or other aspect

would have been too time-consuming for the time frame that I had available for this study. In addition, the purpose of this research was to gain a broad understanding of veterans and their experiences through exploration, with the idea that further research could be conducted to address the needs of more specific groups within the military.

Once the request for participation was sent out via the Veterans Services Listserv, veterans that were interested in volunteering sent me an email including information on when they took Engl-101 and the best way to contact them. When few people responded to this call for participation, the same request was sent out again. Volunteers were repeatedly reminded that they could withdraw their participation at any time without consequence to them. Once a date that worked with the majority of the volunteers was identified, we met in the Veterans Lounge in the Veterans Services office. This location was selected because it was a familiar environment for the participants and has several comfortable couches. In addition, the lounge could be locked for privacy from the public. I wanted participants to be as relaxed as possible so that their responses could be authentic. Once all of the participants arrived at the lounge, I reminded them of the voluntary nature of the study before we began the focus group. After the discussion ended, participants were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix F) as to whether or not I could directly quote them. This permission form informed participants that they would be quoted only with the use of pseudonyms. Consent and permission to be recorded came with their response to the initial call for participation.

### **Configuration and Design of Focus Group**

Two GTAs from the English Department that had experience working with veterans were trained by me to assist with the focus groups. One GTA was responsible for monitoring the audio

recorder while also taking hand-written notes about the broader themes that arose during the discussion. The other GTA monitored the film recorder and also served as a second moderator when necessary. I served as the main moderator. As moderator, my role was to ask the questions and also make sure that every participant had the opportunity to voice his or her experience. If a participant began to dominate the conversation, thus barring others from speaking up, my job was to politely encourage others to enter the conversation.

The focus group involved five participants and lasted two hours. Participants in the focus group reported that they came from various military branches. Self-references throughout the discussion indicated that three identify as male and two identify as female. One of the females revealed that she served as an officer in an undisclosed branch of the military. One of the males disclosed that he was a member of the Marines, while one of the other males stated that he served in the infantry for the Army. No questions regarding race or ethnicity were pursued because it did not pertain to the focus of this research. Participants were made aware that the purpose of this research was to discover what their experiences had been in the Engl-101 classroom environment and in working towards the course goals for written assignments, but they were not offered the focus group questions in advance. The intent behind this action was to discover the participants' first impressions in response to the questions. The discussion began with broader questions so as to see what participants naturally discussed as the most important issues to them. When asked questions about the course goals and assignments in Engl-101, participants were provided with samples to refresh their memory (Appendix G).



### **Configuration and Design of the Follow-Up Interview**

In order to ensure that a wide range of responses and detailed information was gathered regarding participants' experiences, I asked for their participation in one-on-one follow-up interviews at the end of the focus group. Participants were told that a single, hour-long interview with me would be held to discuss the content of the focus group in greater detail, in addition to other questions that may have arisen during the group discussion. Two veterans volunteered, but one wasn't able to participate because of a scheduling conflict. The interview questions were developed after reviewing the data gathered in the focus group and were then submitted to HSC for approval. As in the focus group, the questions posed were open-ended to allow for emergent themes. The veteran, a member of the Marines, and I met in a private room on campus for the interview. I took notes on his responses to the questions while also recording the interview for audio. Permission to record the interview for audio and to quote the participant with the use of a pseudonym was provided through a signed consent form at the beginning of the interview (Appendix H).

### **Data Analysis**

Upon completion of the focus group, I watched the recorded video to write down the major topics on which participants focused. I also made note of the topics of discussion where there was consensus and contention amongst the participants. While doing this, I did not look at the notes made by the recorder. Once I had completed my initial thematic analysis, I met with the recorder and we compared our notes. Together, we discussed what we saw as the emergent themes from the most discussed topics to the least. Through this discussion we drafted an initial outline of the emergent themes. By taking separate notes and then comparing them I was able to

check the accuracy of my identification of emergent themes from the data. I also compared the themes that emerged with existing research discussed in Chapter 2. Both the recorder and I came up with almost all of the same themes. Together, we also noted specific quotes that served as illustrations for those themes.

Using the outline we developed, I watched the video of the focus group again and made a list of when and for how long each topic was discussed. In these notes I marked where there were specific quotes that illustrated the following: 1) group consensus on a topic; 2) complete disagreement on a topic; and 3) isolated examples of disagreement on a topic, i.e., when only one or two people did not agree with the majority. These specific examples of the broader context were then noted to be transcribed (Appendix I). I also used the notes made with my recorder to analyze the follow-up interview. The follow-up interview then served to provide more specific examples of the broader themes that emerged in the focus group. I made note of quotes in the audio recording of the interview that contributed to the same three major areas I noted above.

Using my notes, the recordings, and the partial transcripts, I organized my findings by the emergent themes in relation to the research questions, organized from the most discussed topics to the least discussed topics. This allowed for a more focused understanding of what the participants found to be the most important, for which a chronological analysis would not allow. I also prioritized anything that the participants explicitly noted as important to them, even if it was only discussed briefly. While describing the broader themes, I chose to incorporate quotes that seemed to best illustrate the consensus, or contention, raised. Because I made notes of the themes raised chronologically in the video of the focus group, I revisited segments to make note of body language that might contribute to a better understanding of what was said. In doing this,

I continually revisited the recordings, what Ely calls recursive analysis, as I wrote, thus adding to my understanding of the emergent themes (175).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter presents the methodology driving this study. The focus of this study was to discover what veterans' experiences in Engl-101 at SIUC have been in the classroom environment and in working towards the course goals for the written assignments. Moreover, this study sought to discover what composition teachers can do to improve FYC courses for veterans. In order to answer these questions, qualitative methods (a focus group and an interview) were used to gather data from veterans. I chose to do a qualitative study because it allowed for greater texture in the data, be it non-verbal responses to questions or clarification of an answers provided. It also allowed participants to voice topics and issues that I may not have anticipated. Through the discussion of questions posed in the focus group and the follow-up interview, I was able to identify emergent themes pertinent to my research questions. The subsequent chapter will describe the results of the thematic analysis of the recordings gathered through the process discussed above.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

As discussed in Chapter 3, the main purpose of this study was to explore veterans' experiences in Engl-101 at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale (SIUC). This study also sought to discover what could be done to improve Engl-101 – and FYC courses in general – for veterans. The data gathered from the focus group and the follow-up interview seem to align with many of the findings in previous research on veterans discussed in Chapter 2. In other words, although this study is rooted in the context of SIUC, the themes that emerged from the data were similar to themes discovered in other qualitative research. Additionally, the data yielded numerous emergent themes related to the research questions.

Because of the social and dynamic nature of focus groups and the manner in which participants jumped from one subject to another, the findings of this study are arranged primarily around two considerations under the research questions posed. The findings are primarily arranged by what was discussed for the longest durations. The longer the time that participants spent on a topic, the more it seemed important to them. The findings are also arranged by what was explicitly noted by participants as important issues, even if they only discussed it for a brief period of time.

Before a presentation of the findings of this study pertinent to the research questions, this chapter includes contextual information regarding the focus group's participants that helps frame the findings. As discussed in Chapter 3, I held a follow-up interview with one of the participants after the focus group discussion to gather more data. During the follow-up interview, Justin<sup>7</sup> mentioned that “the military realm” isn't talked about much among non-military people, even

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<sup>7</sup> All names used in this study are pseudonyms.

though it isn't secret. He argued that veterans aren't really understood by non-military persons beyond a vague understanding of the military context from which they come. In light of this observation, I decided to present some of the contextual information regarding the participants as individuals and as a group in order to better understand their relationship to the military and education before addressing my specific research questions. Only one follow-up interview was held. The data from the focus group and the follow-up interview are blended together.

### **Contextual Information Regarding the Study's Participants**

#### *Diversity amongst Participants*

The veterans that participated in the focus group came from diverse backgrounds, both in and out of the military. There were five total participants. Two of the participants were women; Nia and Sofia. Three of the participants were male; Benoal, Eric, and Justin. Although not all of the participants revealed what branch they served in, at least one had served in the Marines (Justin), and at least one had served in the Army (Benoal). In addition to this, each came from different ranks. Some of them had changed ranks during their time of service. Nia indicated that she served as an officer for a period of time. These bits of personal information were raised in moments where the individuals felt like it had a direct relation to the topic of discussion. They also had varying majors, including Aviation, Criminal Justice, and Engineering.

#### *Commonality amongst Participants*

Despite the diversity of backgrounds, experiences, ranks, and so forth, the participants held much in common. Justin even noted that he was shocked by how much "The other members of the group agreed with some of the things that I said. That totally caught me by surprise." For

instance, every participant joined the military for the educational benefits offered. At least one of them specifically noted that he joined immediately after he finished high school. They all noted that because they joined the military for the specific reason of attending college, they cared far more about learning the material presented to them than grades. Benoval argued that he – and the rest of the group – worked hard “to get to school” because the GI Bill “doesn’t come from nowhere, we’re busting our butts to get there.” Because of the nature of the benefits they are provided, every participant had to declare a major before attending SIUC. In this sense, they all revealed that they have a clear end-goal for their time at SIUC: they were here for their degree in the field/major they selected.

Another shared trait that came from their military experience was that the participants consistently raised their concern to exceed the expectations of each class assignment. Even if they got a 100% on a paper, they wanted feedback that showed them how to improve. Sofia said that she liked that her instructor asked “questions like ‘What did you like writing about this essay? What didn’t you like? What could you do better next time?’” She added that she appreciated these comments because “I never really think about [those kinds of questions] when I write.” Nia quickly jumped in to the conversation and said that “I wish mine was like that. Mine was as if I was eighth grade with smiley faces, and stars, and ‘great job’. . . I know I did a great job. I got an A, but can you give me some constructive feedback. . . even though if you say I got a like 100, it’s not 100-worthy to me; there is somewhere I could have done better on.” Benoval agreed: “There is always room for progress.” In a similar vein, they all agreed that they tended to approach the information they were provided as a mission. Most of the participants claimed to plan out their approaches to the assignments of Engl-101 and then to seek attaining the goals that they had set. This goal-setting mentality is something that they all seemed to

attribute to the training and experiences that they had while in the military. On this point, Sofia noted that “[I] come from a background that my parents don’t have money and can’t afford to send me to school, so the military was a way for me to afford school, and I work hard for it and I earn it.”

Beyond the desire to perform well in Engl-101 and school in general, all of the participants relayed that they complied with their instructors – even if they didn’t like the way the class was being taught or handled. They also weren’t afraid to talk to their instructors about their concerns. For example, on one hand, Nia indicated that her teacher would often look to her in class for her thoughts, as if she knew more than others. She said that every time her instructor had “something or a question, she’d need me to support her, so she’d look over like, ‘you have something to say. . .’; like I was a TA for the class. [I] shoulda been paid.” This happened frequently, but Nia always participated – even when it got annoying – because she wanted to help the class out. On the other hand, Nia did voice her concerns to the instructor about the way the class was run, stating in the focus group that “To get control of [non-military students] they can’t look at their tablets or phones.” But even when her instructor wouldn’t do anything, Nia, like many of the other participants, noted that she typically deferred to her instructor’s decisions.

Another theme that arose relevant to commonality amongst the participants of this study was that they appreciated privacy regarding their military experience. Nia noted that for her, military experience is “Back in the back.” They didn’t want to be primarily identified as veterans in the classroom – they all saw themselves as students first. This especially became clear when Benoval raised his concerns that even if veterans request to miss class for reasons they don’t want to discuss, they’re “Still doing their work, probably better than anybody in the class. You don’t expect to get crap about that kind of stuff.” Nia argued, in response to Benoval’s

comment, that it was better for instructors to be briefed on veterans prior to teaching them so that they could respect their privacy. Justin also noted that instructors shouldn't ask what is going on when a veteran requests to miss class, probably because they have an appointment at the VA and don't want to talk about it. He said that "[I]f I have an appointment with the VA, I'm not going to class because I'm not going to wait another two months to get that appointment." Although some of the participants didn't seem to mind sharing their military experience in the classroom, they certainly did not want to share any information regarding their health. That said, they were fairly candid and open in the focus group itself.

Finally, all of the participants acknowledged that the transition from the military to life as a student was hard because of the abrupt shift from one culture to another. They all agreed that the culture of school in general, and Engl-101 in particular, was completely different from what they were used to in the military. Justin discussed the struggle of this transition even further, noting that it was like he had to "relearn how to be normal." At the same time, while participants may seek to become "normal," Justin argued that veterans also "really like where we came from," and they like the "values" they learned in the military because they're "good values." Adjusting to the culture of academia can feel like lowering standards to veterans.

### **Research Question 1: What Have Veterans' Experiences Been Within the Classroom Environment of Engl-101 at SIUC?**

#### *The Culture Shock – Interacting with Non-military Students Fresh Out of High School*

Once the initial question of what their experience in Engl-101 had been like was asked, all of the participants focused on how frustrating the other non-military students could be. Although a few of them mentioned that their instructors were good, they addressed this



observation only briefly before they moved to discussing their negative perceptions of non-military students. Of their greatest contentions with the other students raised was the use of phones and other technology. Participants expressed that it was hard to focus when students were using their phones. A common complaint was that teachers often didn't do anything about it, or didn't notice it. Benoval described his experience as such: "You know people on their phones, couple people on Facebook, people talking over there, people talking over here, you can't hear what [the instructor] is saying, people don't really care, instead of trying to take control of her classroom." Although the fact that his teacher didn't do anything about the students' actions, he emphasized that it was the students' behavior that was so distracting. He saw it as disrespectful to himself, the other students, and the instructor. The expectations of paying attention to authority were cited as one of the main reasons that this behavior was such a distraction within the classroom. Throughout the course of the focus group, the participants would frequently circle back to the students' "disrespectful" behavior with technology, in addition to their general appearance. Nia noted that she was surprised by the appearance of traditional students, who often came to class in "their pjs and their flip flops." Laughing, she revealed that she wanted to say to the students: "You're disgusting, you should have took a shower. Brush your teeth before coming to class." Like the use of technology, this behavior was seen as disrespectful to them, the other students, and the instructors.

Besides the issue of technology usage and general appearance, the participants expressed disdain for students that failed to use "critical thinking." When asked about the behavior of the students and how they approached the course work and class activities, Justin noted that they worked "Just to get that grade," and Benoval agreed. Eric said that they "A) don't care, and B) don't have the stuff to pull out." Nia said that she would "ask them questions" to make "their

minds, like wheels, turn.” She wanted to push non-military students to “come up with something more in-depth,” because she felt like they weren’t thinking critically. In addition to this, participants expressed frustration when a student didn’t have knowledge of something that they felt they should have. This failure to have knowledge about issues related to the course readings or the requirements of a prompt was often blamed on non-military students’ failure to do the required work. Many of the veterans expressed that they would be one of the few in their class that did the homework, so they were stuck having to listen to the teacher go over content in which students should have already been engaged.

The expectations that were applied to the participants in the military were the same expectations that they carried with them to the classroom. That said, they generally recognized that these expectations were unrealistic. The reason they had these expectations, however, was because they had just come out of the culture of the military and they were not prepared for the stark contrast with the culture of non-military students on campus. For instance, Benoval noted that “I didn’t think I was going to be having to raise my hand, in college classes. That’s totally ridiculous that you [students] can’t figure out how to speak after another person.” Justin felt like the other students “just genuinely didn’t care.”

### *Perceptions of Engl-101 Instructors*

One of the other larger themes that arose during the discussion of veterans experiences within the classroom environment of Engl-101 was that they all had broadly positive experiences with their instructors. Justin said that “I got really lucky, my instructor ... was really good. Once I told her some issues that I had, she immediately adjusted to it, so for me it worked really well.” He also noted that “she actually took the effort to construct the class before coming to class,

rather than just doing it on the fly like I see a lot of teachers and professors do.” Eric also noted that “my teacher actually cared and knew stuff and was passionate about the English language.” Many of them said that their instructors were more patient with the other students than they would be. Many of them also revealed that their instructors cared about the students in their class. Benoval laughed when this came up, stating that “it’s funny you have to say that’s a ... compliment” that an instructor wants to “teach well.” He described his teacher as “very knowledgeable” and “more relatable,” but he also said that she “kind of let the class run all over.” They also noted that their instructors tended to be knowledgeable of the subject matter, which was incredibly important to them. Again, this was something that they appreciated, but also felt should be a standard.

Instructors’ care for students and a large knowledge-base of the course content was also raised when many of the participants noted that that would visit their instructors during office hours frequently throughout the semester. Justin noted that he would go multiple times each unit to expand on the instruction that was provided during class time. Overall, the participants of the focus group felt like their instructors were accessible outside of class because of their behavior within class. They felt like they could voice their concerns about their papers and what was occurring in the classroom, thus improving their experience. At the same time, they felt like they could voice the problems they were encountering in their own writing. For instance, Justin realized that his writing process was different than what was being taught in class, but he talked about this with his instructor because he felt comfortable in sharing that information.

Despite the positive experiences that participants of the focus group had, Justin revealed in the follow-up interview that “Honestly, I don’t feel like GAs should be teaching the class,” because they don’t know how to show their authority in the class. Justin told me that even though

his experience in Engl-101 was “spot-on” and that he had a great instructor, he wanted to speak on behalf of the other veterans that he knew that weren’t so lucky. Although the participants respected their instructors, there was also mild frustration with their lack of teaching experience. Sofia felt like her instructor didn’t have as good of control of the class as some of the other participants. Benoval also felt like his instructor didn’t have good control of the classroom, especially since his class was in a computer lab. He thought that the way the classroom was set up made it even harder for the instructor to maintain control, but he emphasized that his instructor just didn’t intervene if students weren’t on task. All of the veterans noted that they felt like there were times when their instructors didn’t know that they had “authority” at their “disposal.” For instance, one veteran noted that instructors should use their authority to “kick students out” when they violate the phone policy. This was something about which everyone agreed: they would have loved it if their instructors had done something along those lines.

Besides their concerns about teachers not intervening when students were violating class policies, the participants also expressed frustration with what was collectively described as “spoon-feeding” each lesson. Because many of the non-military students failed to do the required work, like reading, the instructors would have to adapt their lessons to go over that material in class, rather than moving on to the intended lesson. This infuriated the participants, who noted that they came to class prepared to do the work that the teacher had for them, but they felt like their time was being wasted because of the other weren’t. Sofia noted that “most of the time my classmates ... never were prepared for anything so every time lecture came [the instructor] would pretty much spoon-feed everyone.” Yet, as much as the participants bashed “spoon-fed” lessons, they also noted that material assigned outside of class “really didn’t stick.” In this sense,

they valued class time because that is where they saw most of their learning occurring. To the participants, being “spoon-fed” was a waste of valuable time.

Another issue that veterans raised related to their instructors was that they felt like the instructors relied on them to help carry discussion. As mentioned earlier, Nia’s instructor frequently looked to her to help lead discussion. I asked if that frustrated her, but she laughingly noted that she felt like she was “like the class elder.” Nia saw it as an opportunity to help the non-military students learn more. Although she treated this experience as positive, the other participants did not have the same experiences. Eric said that when there was a “dead spot” in class discussions, he would “jump in and say what I thought on what [the instructor] was talking about,” but that it “gets a little irritating to be speaking every single question.” Sofia admitted that sometimes she was the one who wasn’t paying attention in class, but it was mostly her and “another student who had to lead through the discussions” because other students wouldn’t talk.

What should be noted is that no matter how frustrated the participants got about their instructors, they always seemed to defer to their authority. The participants often mentioned that they didn’t know how to be teachers, so there was respect for what the instructors did. As was previously discussed, Benoval, Justin, and Nia had no issue in expressing their concerns about the class to their instructors, yet, at the same time, they didn’t try to change the content or structure of the class. The requests that they made were mostly in regards to the way the behaviors of the other students were treated, most notably in the lack of instructors’ failure to intervene when students were using technology unrelated to class, like phones or tablets. Moreover, they wanted instructors to draw more participation out of students. Ultimately, they disliked students’ behaviors and they wanted teachers to do more about it.

*Perceptions of the Lessons and the Physical Classroom Environment*

Beyond their focus on the students and the instructors, the participants of this study revealed a number of topics that they felt had significance. They discussed how they like each class to be well-structured instead of the “spoon-fed” lessons previously discussed. A number of them had positive experiences with well-structured lessons. When considering the structure of a lesson, there were a few things that the participants found incredibly important. The first was that they wanted to be shown how to do the work in class. For instance, when discussing the second unit of Engl-101 – the Advertisement Analysis – Justin noted that the best lesson he had was when his instructor “brought in a bunch of different pictures to give us examples, and then we did an analysis with the whole class multiple times to give us a perspective on what exactly we’re supposed to be doing and it made it... like butter, it was really smooth.” The main emphasis of his argument was that in-class practice of what should be done in the essay was great when coupled with repetition. Other participants agreed with his sentiments, and Eric noted that his instructor would “reiterate” how to identify and use the rhetorical appeals in “every class,” which was helpful. The more approaches to understanding or working on a particular aspect of writing, the better, as Eric argued that having an instructor that was “good about spinning something one or two ways if people didn’t get it the first time” was crucial to the success of a class period.

In a similar fashion, many of the participants contended that “visual” and “hands-on” means of representation were the most helpful ways for them to understand what they were supposed to do since that is what they experienced in the military. Justin noted in the follow-up interview and in the focus group that this may be because in the military “we’re shown what we’re going to learn; then we’re shown how to do it; and then we have to show that we know it;

and then if we do it wrong we're told, 'Hey, this is what you need to do to make it right.'" This may be why there was mutual agreement in the focus group that Tuesday/Thursday classes were better than Monday/Wednesday/Friday classes. Nia argued that "English, for what it is, needs to be taught on Tuesday/Thursdays because then you're there for a longer period," to which Eric responded that when he was in a Monday/Wednesday/Friday class, it felt like it was "go, go, go, leave." Now that he is in a Tuesday/Thursday section of Engl-102, he argued that it "makes a lot of difference." Everyone in the group agreed with this observation because they wanted more time in class to see what they needed to do while also being provided with time to practice it with the instructor and the other students.

Despite their appreciation for well-structured lessons, many of them noted that they didn't have well-structured peer reviews or group activities. This caused great anger for many of participants. They noted that they didn't receive helpful feedback in peer review because the students they worked with didn't know how to constructively respond. Eric said that he had a broadly positive experience with peer reviews. Justin expressed that he wished his peer review experience was as good as Eric's, because his experience was that "when [students] would review my paper it wasn't so much they were actually reviewing it; they were just reading it and they were like 'Okay yeah, you missed a period; I get what you're saying.' There was really no review to it." This was immensely upsetting to Justin because he said that "when it was my turn I would have ripped their heart out and showed it to them." Sofia said that there was one student with whom she liked to do peer review, but her instructor required them to trade partners periodically, so she didn't get the feedback she desired. The participants pointed out that their instructors could have given clearer direction on how to respond to peer review.

Going back to the concerns that participants had with technology in the classroom, Justin noted in the follow-up interview that it was hard for him because he was trained to be hyper aware of his physical surroundings. He revealed that in the military, “we get different kinds of training” and a “heightened awareness of our surroundings.” This ties into his hyper-awareness, which he said “drains my attention to focus on learning.” He was used to identifying everyone as a “potential threat.” His hyper-awareness would then impede his ability to digest what the class was discussing or the teacher was teaching if someone was on social media. Although the other students didn’t say explicitly that they were hyper-aware, they did say that students on technology engaged much of their attention during class.

Participants noted that there were a few technologies that were used in class that they hated. They vehemently noted that PowerPoints were the worst possible way of presenting information to a veteran because they were used on a weekly basis in the military – a practice that lead to the term “Death by PowerPoint.” They revealed that most times that they were given information in the military, it was through PowerPoints. Although few of them had experienced the use of PowerPoints in class, they all made it abundantly clear that they “switched off” when they were used. In addition to this, many of them expressed severe frustration with the online textbook and learning management system that was used when they took Engl-101. Eric said that he didn’t like the system used. Nia said that “It’s a different feel” to have a “book you can bend, rather than just a tablet to hold.” Justin described the tablets as “a failure” because “it was difficult to navigate through some of assignments whether it was typing – cause those keyboards – or without the keyboard at all.” Benoval noted that it was hard for him to read digital texts in general, perhaps due to his PTSD.



**Question 2: What Have Veterans' Experiences Been in Working Towards the Course Goals for the Written Assignments of Engl-101 at SIUC?**

*Moving from Military Writing Conventions to FYC Writing Conventions*

One of the liveliest discussions during the focus group was that the writing conventions of the military were much different than those of Engl-101, especially when it came to length. The main conflict between military conventions and Engl-101 conventions that the participants noted was that it was hard to move from the concise points used in military genres to the descriptive and elaborated points of FYC genres. All of them had experienced writing a military genre called After Action Reviews (AARs). Eric, Justin, and Nia broke down the major aspects of an AAR, which involve descriptions of what went well, what went wrong, and what could be done better next time after a mission or some other military endeavor. AARs could be conducted orally in a setting similar to focus group, but sometimes they could be a short, written document involving a minimum of three points. All of the participants noted that they never had to write more than a page and a half when they were in the military. Even the concept of writing a three-page essay was intimidating to the participants when they first started school. Benoval noted that his experience was unique in that he served in the infantry, so he “didn’t barely write ever.” Sofia noted that any writing she did for the military was “short and to the point, so it was hard for me to, like, elaborate and make five pages long with my writing. . . one sentence is just what I think about.” Eric responded to this and said that “The shorter you can make it is better.” Nia chimed in and said that they had to get used to making “a sentence into a page.” She expanded on this issue, noting that writing styles differ within the military itself, so she had to adapt to different demands as she changed rank.

Additionally, the participants said that they were used to using acronyms and vocabulary associated with the military, but that they were strong writers when it came to being objective. Justin noted that the vocabulary shift from the military to Engl-101 was hard. He said that a friend of his looked over his first paper and described it as “completely military” because he used acronyms and “military words” like “execute,” “to accomplish” and others, to which everyone in the group laughed in agreement. This said, the participants agreed that they were skilled at being “objective” because of their writing experience in the military. Nia was used to describing people for military intelligence in short sentences like “Black shirt. Period. . . Cargo pants. Period.” The group laughed when she said this. Justin agreed and added that it felt natural to avoid bias. In addition to this, the participants agreed that when provided with a prompt that indicated the expected structure of a paper, they felt much more confident. Justin also said that he had to write Naval correspondence which was structured to the point that every aspect of it was like “this is how you write it, this is how you write it. . . I’m used to this absolute, definitive structure in how you’re going to write a paper.” Because they were used to defined structure in their writing, the participants also noted that it was hard when essay prompts didn’t clearly explain their requirements.

### *Strengths in Veterans’ Approaches to the Course Goals for Written Assignments*

When it came to discussing any strengths that veterans possessed in relation to working towards the course goals, there were a few things about which they all agreed. All of them were motivated to do well in the course because they had joined the military specifically to fund their education. They insisted that they came to SIUC to learn, not just to earn a grade. Eric argued that “I’m here to get a degree, like I know where I am going... I need to get through [Engl-101]

and I want to do well to get where I'm going." Justin said that "I think that we all actually value the education, whereas these other students just. . . don't really care." The grade, although important, was less important than the actual accomplishment of the course goals. Most of the participants saw this class as important to them in that it helped them progress in their education and move closer to their degrees. They also saw it as a course that could teach them useful skills and strategies. Although some of them had frustrations with the content (which will be discussed further in a later section) the participants treated the class as something that should be beneficial.

The participants also revealed that they were good about planning ahead and setting goals for themselves. Each recognized their writing needs, so they adapted their approaches to suit. For instance, Benoval claimed that he was a procrastinator, but he also acknowledged that he thought about his papers a lot before he wrote them. He stated that "I'm meticulous right off the bat. I really don't have a rough draft. When I write it the first time, it takes a long time." A completely different approach to accomplishing the course goals came from Eric, who set the goal of completing his essays at least a day before they were due. Although their approaches were different, they all expressed an awareness of how they could productively use time to work towards the final products of assignment. Most of the participants indicated that they would plan their time so that they could have their instructors, the Writing Center, or a friend offer feedback.

Whether or not they were procrastinators, the participants all agreed that they were proactive in seeking help as a part of their writing process. In this sense, all admitted to wanting clarification from instructors. Justin said that he would go to his instructor a number of times for each unit to get insight on how to improve his paper. Most of them preferred that their interactions with their instructors be during office hours. One reason was that participants preferred having one-on-one interaction. They felt like they could accomplish more in the time

provided to them. In addition, meeting one-on-one with their instructors removed the distractions coming from the rest of the students, both to them and to the instructors.

Participants' desire to utilize structure in planning also influenced their approaches to writing assignments. They indicated that it was a challenge to move from the "structured, disciplined lifestyle" of the military to "this chaos that's college," but they made their own structured schedule to address the course goals. Sofia liked to research the subject to "get an idea of what I was writing about" before she would begin writing. Justin joked that he gave himself plenty of time to get other people to review his paper. He said that "I would write my paper, read it, correct it; then I probably went through a tree." Justin even saw the weekend as the time to "do and plan your schedule." All of the participants agreed that their classes were viewed as their job now. They planned much of their life around accomplishing their goals for Engl-101, in addition to their other courses.

Participants sought a clear break down of the assignment expectations when working towards the course goals. They argued that having a "skeleton" or an "outline" of the expectations of the assignment made it easier for them to work toward the course goals. Eric described his desire, which was "just tell me what needs to be in [the essay] and I can go with it." The other participants nodded their head in agreement – they added that they wanted to know what kinds of information would need to go into each section of each essay, which was something that they felt the prompts didn't do. In addition to outlines and clear descriptions of what they needed to accomplish, the participants noted that they were appreciative of being provided with samples of the major essays. Nia noted that her instructor provided samples of an A paper and C paper, which was incredibly useful to her. Benoval noted that this allowed the students to still critically think about what makes an A paper. Although they wanted more

freedom to write in their own style and to think critically through their writing process, the participants noted that they still wanted some structure to help guide them. When they had this structure, they were able to write much more comfortably and confidently.

Their proactive approach to reaching the course goals also carried into their interaction with friends outside of class. Most of them felt like the traditional students in class didn't have much to offer them when it came to reviewing a paper, so participants would go to friends that they believed cared about their work. Justin noted that he would go to his friend or people that he lived with just to get more feedback, so she tried to talk with him frequently. Sofia said that she had a friend in her section of Engl-101 that gave her good feedback. The kinds of commentary they wanted was not made clear. They alluded to the idea that they struggled with the basics: "pronoun, verb, adverb stuff that was all fresh" for high school students, but they seemed willing to receive feedback on any aspect of their writing if it helped them write stronger essays.

In addition to the proactive tendencies of the participants and their desire to do whatever possible to exceed expectations, the participants noted some other skills that were common to veterans. They acknowledged that these are not universal traits of veterans, but that it was more common than not. The most notable trait discussed was that of critical thinking. Despite the idea that the military makes everyone conform to certain standards, Benoval argued that most of them were good at critical thinking. Some of this insight, according to Benoval, was that he was in the infantry, so in combat he was used to making "that split-second decision" when plans didn't work out and there was a need for improvisation. They all agreed that there were times when they didn't have rules to follow, so they had to critically think through their actions.

Another aspect of working towards the course goals that veterans raised was that they tended to consider themselves good at reading and writing most texts carefully because they

were trained to be analytical. They noted that in the military they had to be analytical when writing documents like AARs. Justin revealed in the follow-up interview that he was used to planning for every single contingency by viewing multiple angles on an issue or a mission. When I finished recording the focus group and distributed the consent form, the participants all took the time to read through it carefully. They asked me questions about different sections, and one of them pointed out a small typo. The participants all joked that they read carefully because they didn't read all of the paperwork for signing up for the military, so they "learned from their mistake." This skill was something that they applied to their critical analysis of advertisements in the Advertisement Analysis, as Nia noted that she "pushed the boundaries" to utilize the course theme of "Water."

In our discussion of the course goals during the focus group, I noted that none of them ever discussed the third essay, the Rhetorical Analysis. I brought this to the attention of Justin in the follow-up interview, and he reasoned that it was because it wasn't hard for any of the participants. He stated that "I would think that it was because it was analytical... everything we do we have to analyze." To him, the analytical nature of the assignment was something that they could easily address because of the analytical skills that they could be transfer from their military experience.

### *Challenges Veterans Encountered in Working towards the Course Goals for Written*

#### *Assignments*

The most notable challenge in working towards the course goals that participants raised was that they were far removed from the school experience of writing. As previously mentioned, Eric noted that high school students had an advantage on them in that they had experience with

basic parts of speech. They saw themselves as disadvantaged: they hadn't had to write anything more than a page and half to three pages in four or more years because of their military background. Justin expanded on this concern in the follow-up interview, revealing that when he got the first assignment – the Literacy Narrative – he went back to his dorm and had a panic attack. Nia stated that she hadn't "written an English style, MLA form-paper since high school," which had been eight years ago. In this sense, the participants felt like the expected conventions of Engl-101 were new to them. Although they possessed skills to work towards those goals, they had no idea what the end result was supposed to be. The newness of English-101 and its writing conventions were such that it took them time to adjust how they would approach the course. The participants revealed that they figured out what to do as the course progressed, but the initial shock of being exposed to new expectations took a while to adjust to.

Reportedly, many aspects of the course goals for written assignments felt challenging to them. The goal of using the "conventions of academic writing" was frequently translated to them as an issue of length. Most of the participants seemed to be confident in presenting "argumentative and analytical writing," but only when employing the genres they were used to in the military, which were often less than a page long. The idea of making a claim and then elaborating it and providing supporting evidence seemed tedious to the participants. Synthesizing sources was also described as challenging. Yet, as mentioned before, Justin felt that the reason the Rhetorical Analysis essay wasn't discussed was because they were all comfortable with its short length and analytical nature. In addition, the Advertisement Analysis was fairly approachable to them because of its clear, required structure. Seeing the page requirement on an essay was initially terrifying to many of the participants because they didn't know how to expand their claims beyond a few sentences.

The participants also felt that the essay prompts (Appendix D) did not help them work towards the goals for them. According to them, the discomfort and challenge of writing the length could be alleviated if they had a clearer understanding of what was expected of them, allowing them to “plug and chug,” as Justin put it. Of the prompts, one the greatest frustration was understanding the audience. Eric revealed that he was used to writing “boards” for promotions – which is similar to resumes or applications to graduate schools. He always knew exactly who his audience was, be it a higher ranking servicemember or a committee. Some of the other participants nodded in agreement when Eric shared his experience in writing for boards. The participants felt that the way the audiences were described in the prompts weren’t believable, which made it challenging for them to address them. In fact, Justin requested that his pseudonym be derived from the Advertisement Analysis prompt, which requires a business memo to be written to an RSO President, named Justin Time. They all laughed about the hypothetical situations provided, to which they concluded that the prompts would be “way better” if they just listed the specific requirements of the paper. They weren’t opposed to being provided context for the assignment, but they wanted it framed in a different manner. Eric commented that it is better to “keep it simple stupid.” Justin then added that the hypothetical example provided for the fourth essay, the Synthesis Essay, was so confusing that his instructor started to read it, only to stop and put it down and write her expectations on the board. In this sense, the participants seemed to argue that it would be much better to just state who the audience is rather than providing an elaborate description.

In general, participants felt that the prompts used weren’t as clear as they could be. Essentially, they felt that the language used had too much “jargon.” The challenge in Engl-101 was to find the “civilian equivalents to meaning.” They claimed that the prompt should be



written to the level that freshman students are at, not the level of “English experts.” Combined with the hypothetical examples, the complicated language of the prompts was something that they felt made it hard for them to address the course goals. Without a clearly defined understanding of what they needed to do, the participants argued that they couldn’t make a plan. Most of them said the prompt was “not helpful at all”: to which Sofia noted that she always went to her instructor to clarify the prompts’ requirements. Based on this information, it didn’t seem like any of the participants’ instructors altered the prompt language to suit their teaching style. That said, the participants revealed that they would always seek clarification from their instructors to make sure they understood what to do to work towards the goals. This was done both in and outside of class.

A less common struggle the focus group participants mentioned, but a struggle nonetheless, was that it was hard to read texts for various reasons. Many of the veterans weren’t used to reading academic sources critically, which is especially crucial to the later assignments of Engl-101, despite their critical thinking skills. Benoval emphasized that some of a veteran’s struggle of reading a text might come from having PTSD, but Nia noted that she also just had trouble focusing on reading in general. The other participants nodded their heads in agreement on this. What Benoval and Nia found as a useful strategy to address this struggle was to use programs that read PDF files to them whenever possible. The other participants also agreed that strategy could be helpful. This seemed to make the reading assignments easier to engage with than just reading over a page multiple times.

*Veterans' Experiences in Working towards the Major Essays*

Besides the themes discussed in the section immediately above, the participants tended to want to talk about the major essays more than specific course goals. When asked questions about the course goals, they would look at the list very briefly and then jump to describing their experience with an essay. Most of these experiences with an essay were not explicitly discussed in tandem with any of the goals: they simply shared their experience with the major essays. This practice was even acknowledged by Justin when he raised a point about Essay 4, when he stated that he didn't know how his experience related to the course goals, but he knew that Essay 4 was hard for him and he wanted to talk about it. In this sense, the participants' discussion of the major essays arose separately from the discussion above.

The participants were quick to praise the Literacy Narrative, despite their initial concerns with writing in college when they first started the course. They all agreed that it was a helpful assignment with which to begin Engl-101 because it didn't have a strict structure. Although this appeared to be a contradiction with their desire to have more structure with other essays, the participants claimed that they felt like the Literacy Narrative allowed them to explore writing on their own while building confidence to write more. Justin argued that it was much "easier to just change those gears" for an "academic setting" and "getting back into writing papers." Eric concurred and added that it was nice to just share the "experience you had" while having "free reign" to experiment with writing. They knew that they could write about themselves far more easily than some subjects, so they approached the assignment with far more confidence that they did Essay Four, for example. The participants felt like the Literacy Narrative served as a good transition from the military to academic writing because it didn't seem to have the same rigor that the others did since it didn't require "putting together a bunch of sources." Granted, there

was still a fear of writing at the college level for some of the participants. As mentioned before, Justin revealed in the follow-up interview that he went to his dorm and had a panic attack after seeing the first assignment because he didn't even know how to "format a header, much less write more than a page." But once he focused on writing about his experience, he found himself growing in confidence as a writer.

Because of how quickly the participants praised the Literacy Narrative, I asked them what the transition to the Advertisement Analysis was like since it is much more structured. They responded that it was great because it had clear structure and they got to choose the advertisement they wanted to analyze, which helped them engage themselves in the work. Eric noted that it was "really interesting to actually read into" the advertisements. They also noted that structure made it easy to fill in each section of the paper, easing their concern of how long the paper is compared to the first essay. They also enjoyed the analytical nature of the assignment.

The participants had mixed experiences with the final portfolio. When they first entered the class, they expected the portfolio to be more than putting all of their revised drafts in a folder – which is what most of them were required to do. Rather, they expected to construct a portfolio with a professional appearance. Benoval noted that he went above and beyond the requirements by putting his drafts in plastic cases within a binder, which is what he originally envisioned when he saw the assignment. He went further to say that he used his portfolio as a reference tool after he completed Engl-101. Although not everyone did the same thing, most agreed that the portfolio concept was useful for keeping track of their progress in the class as Justin noted that "you could literally see where you started and then where you finished." Additionally, they felt that it helped them keep track of their work organizationally. Sofia said that she really liked that the portfolio

helped her realize how she thinks and how her writing process works. Most of them liked writing multiple drafts because of their desire to exceed expectations, so tracking their progress was already something that was important to them. At the same time, some of the participants felt like the assignment wasn't useful. Eric noted that his portfolio was electronic, so he didn't get the same comprehensive view of his paper that the others described.

In the midst of our discussions on the different essays, Justin raised his concern that the Literature Review was the hardest for him. The other participants agreed that it was hard, but Justin sought to emphasize that the length of the assignment – coupled with the task of balancing multiple perspectives in the same paper – was the most challenging aspect of working towards the course goals. Although no one else spend much time elaborating on the Literature Review, Justin returned to this topic repeatedly.

### **Question 3: What Practices Could Be Used in and Out of Engl-101 at SIUC - As Well As in Other FYC Courses - to Help Improve Veterans' Experiences in Developing Their Academic Writing Skills?**

#### *What Instructors Can Do*

When asked what could be done to better help veterans work towards the course goals for writing, the participants raised practices used in and out of the classroom that they had already experienced (as described in this chapter) but that they felt could be improved. More specifically, the participants noted that they preferred the use of varied activities within a structured period. They requested an increased use of peer activities, despite the fact that they had great frustration with traditional students. Participants said that they felt like they learned more when they got to practice the skills needed for the major assignments in class with the rest of the class, as Justin

noted was useful when going through Unit 2. What they clarified is that these activities should be more structured than they had experienced. There wasn't a specific description of what this structure would look like, but it was made clear that they wanted a structure that forced the other students to participate. Over and over, the word structure came up when the participants described how current classroom practices could be improved.

In a similar vein, the participants noted that they wanted to be shown how to perform each aspect of writing a given paper, do it as a group, and then repeat if they did something wrong. The more repetition and in-class practice of the strategies and conventions that related to the major assignments, the better the instruction was presumed to be. This style of learning is what they said they were used to in the military, and they felt that it worked well. Eric suggested that one day the instructor could teach the material, showing the students how to do it, and then have students try to put it in their own words the next class period – perhaps through a group activity as described in the previous paragraph. They stated that their instructors would show them how to do things in class, but that they would repeat the same point over and over, which is also what they dubbed as “spoon-feeding.” They wanted more hands-on practice in class so that the instructors could encourage them in their efforts and progress. Having instructors merely model strategies wasn't enough: the participants wanted a chance to practice them under the supervision and correction of their instructors as well.

A strategy used to teach in the military that was also suggested by the participants was the use of models. Justin elaborated that it would be helpful if instructors could help veterans transfer the skills they learned in the military to the classroom. He argued that he had a lot of the skills he needed, but he didn't realize how they could be used in both contexts. For example, Justin told me how he was used to planning for multiple contingencies when he was in the

military: every plan accounted for multiple possibilities and there were multiple plans. He argued that those skills were helpful for analyzing, but he wasn't used to applying his analytic skills to a text when he first started the class. Nia was the most outspoken on this issue. As mentioned before, she argued that it helped her understand exactly what was expected of her, as when her instructor provided an example of an A paper and C paper. Benoval agreed with her, but he also noted that he realized that other students might take advantage of such "visual" resources and try to plagiarize or "something like that." Although Benoval emphatically agreed with Nia, he wanted to make it clear that not all students were trustworthy, so he acknowledged a possible weakness in Nia's argument. He, and the others, saw models as another way of presenting the expected structure of the assignment.

Another request made by the participants was that audible versions of the class readings be made available. Both Nia and Benoval were vocal about the usefulness of this technology. Benoval noted that it helped him process the information because it was hard for him to focus on reading, possibly due to his PTSD. Nia didn't say anything about PTSD, but she did say that she used the PDF reader function frequently. She argued that it helped her focus on the meaning of the text better than just trying to read it. When Benoval and Nia raised this issue, the other participants nodded their heads in agreement.

### *What Writing Studies and the English Department Can Do*

Some of the requests that veterans made to improve Engl-101 were actions that instructors couldn't do on their own. Although there was no discussion of PTSD and other military-related injuries until the last few minutes of the focus group, one of the most emphasized suggestions made was to have some sort of training for instructors that informed

them about working with veterans, specifically those with PTSD. No specific mention of military-related health issues was made until the end of the focus group when the participants seemed more comfortable with everyone present. Only allusions to health issues from military experience, and how they affected their life as students, were made early on in the group. Two of the participants made no allusions to personal health related to the military. That said, in the last fifteen minutes of the focus group, Benoval noted that he personally has PTSD; to which two other veterans quickly alluded to going to the VA because of health issues.

There was no mention of training instructors on other issues related to the military per se, other than that they wanted instructors to know to respect their privacy, especially in relation to their health. This issue of privacy caused all of the participants to offer their own reasons for desiring privacy. Nia said that it was unpleasant to talk to her instructor personal issues, and if her instructor would ask her what was going on, her response would be “mind your business.” They indicated that some sort of training might improve instructors’ approaches to working with veterans one-on-one so as to avoid the invasion of privacy they detest. They also raised the issue that veterans will likely say they can’t come to class, but they won’t say why. They acknowledged that some veterans would take advantage of this privacy, but they also argued that it was better to allow it since the reluctance may result from the fact that they have appointments at the VA, which take top priority in their minds.

Another suggestion provided by the participants was that of offering a veterans-only section. This topic was one of the most contentious issue during the entire discussion. Justin raised the idea, and Eric and Benoval seemed to support it. However, Sofia noted that she would rather her instructor “not know that I’m a veteran. A personal feeling.” Nia also argued that “there’s a reason why I got out of the military: I don’t need to be reminded of it, and hear talk

about it like ‘Well, when I did this...,’ ‘Shut up, we’re in a university now. I want to talk about university issues.’ If you want to talk about it, go back.” This led to a discussion that they left the military to focus on education. They didn’t want to be seen primarily as veterans, so a veterans-only section would go against that ideology. When I discussed this with Justin further, he argued that maybe a section of adults would be a better approach to the issue than having a veterans-only section. He reasoned that it would allow those who had a clearer vision of their educational goals to come together.

## **Summary**

This chapter has presented the themes that emerged from an analysis of the data gathered through the recording of a focus group and a follow-up interview of veterans who completed FYC at SIUC. Ultimately, many of the themes that emerged were consistent with the findings of recent research on veterans. The participants frequently found themselves distracted and frustrated by the actions of students, especially when it involved the use of phones or computers to access social media. They also struggled when their instructors didn’t correct students that weren’t behaving well or didn’t teach in the way that they were used to in the military. Moreover, many of the veterans seemed to be challenged by the writing conventions of Engl-101 because of their background in the military. Paradoxically, the participants also felt that they were aided by skills they acquired from the military when it came to writing the major essays and when interacting with others in the classroom setting. The suggestions they had for improving Engl-101 have already been undertaken to some extent, but could be tweaked. The following chapter will discuss how these results could be used to improve the way we prepare



instructors to teach veterans in Engl-101 and better help veterans work towards the course goals for written assignments.

## CHAPTER 5

### IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study used qualitative methods – a focus group and an interview – to discover what experiences of participating veterans had been in working towards the course goals for written assignments of Engl-101 at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale (SIUC). It also sought to discover what these same veterans' experiences had been within the classroom environment of Engl-101. Additionally, this study sought to gain understanding of what practices could be used to improve participating veterans' experiences in developing their academic writing skills. The findings of this study are limited by the fact that only one focus group of five people was conducted. Moreover, only one follow-up interview was conducted. Thus, the conclusions drawn from this study are tentative at best. Nonetheless, the themes that were identified emerged from the coding of independent raters. Moreover, the emergent themes of this study – which are discussed below – echo with existing research on veterans. Despite the limitations of this study, as was discussed in Chapter 3, qualitative research offers rich texture and multi-layered data which elicits further questions. This study was designed to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on veterans and composition by generating ideas for further research, both qualitative and quantitative. Additionally, because there is little research on veterans, this study focused on potential commonalities that participants held because of their military service. Concerns related to branch of service, gender, race, rank, reasons for joining the military, socioeconomic status, and other factors were not addressed unless participants raised them.

The results of this study, revealed in Chapter 4, are broadly consistent with the findings of recent research on veterans. Like current scholarship, the data gathered for this study suggest that veterans' experiences in higher education are impacted by their prior experiences in the

military. With that in mind, one of the discoveries made in this study was that veterans often struggle with the cultural differences of non-military students, especially those that have just graduated high school. Moreover, student-veterans were sometimes challenged by the difference between the way their superiors in the military and instructors wielded authority. At the same time, this study found that veterans tend to possess skills that stem from their military background that can aid them as students, especially when it comes to planning their approaches to assignments and seeking to create products that exceed expectations. In short, these broader themes uncovered in this study add to the growing body of research on veterans by reinforcing what has already been discovered. Broadly, these include that veterans' expectations for the way a class should be structured and taught are often influenced by their experience in the military. Moreover, their expectations for writing are also often affected by their experience in the military. The themes that arose in this study that aren't in other research are specific to the context of Engl-101 at SIUC.

Beyond this study's contribution to the larger conversation on veterans and composition courses, the findings suggest there are a number of aspects of Engl-101 that could potentially be altered to improve veterans' experience in the classroom and in working towards the established course goals for written assignments. Although student-veterans are having a generally positive experience in Engl-101 at SIUC, their military background makes them a unique student population. While some of the participants' requests to meet their needs are not feasible, there are many possible ways to improve how the course is taught and structured to better assist veterans. It also appears that these changes would likely benefit the entire class, not just veterans. Moreover, the training sessions provided for instructors could benefit in emphasizing teaching

practices that effectively engage veterans. This chapter will continue with a discussion of the emergent themes from the results of this study with suggestions for future research.

### **Research Question 1: What Have Veterans' Experiences Been Within the Classroom Environment of Engl-101 at SIUC?**

#### *Desire for Classroom to Be a Productive Environment*

Although the participants' experiences in Engl-101 were broadly positive, one overarching point emerged as the primary criterion by which they evaluated everything: veterans want the classroom to be a productive environment. This may be due to the fact that they were used to making time productive when in the military. At the same time, this desire also may be because all of this study's participants entered the military so that they could attend college; therefore, they saw the class as something with value, predominately because they had served for at least four years in the military in order to have the opportunity to come to SIUC. They constantly reiterated that they cared about learning the course material of Engl-101, in addition to their other courses, more than they cared about getting a certain grade. Despite all of the diversity amongst the participants – different branches, different ranks, different backgrounds – when they praised their instructors, activities, or the class in general, it was closely linked with the idea of productivity.

The high value that participants placed on education seemed to influence their expectations for the class, which thus influenced their experience. When their idea of what made a “productive” class period didn't occur, they expressed frustration. On the other hand, when a class period helped them accomplish their personal goals, they were satisfied with their experience. Although this could likely be said of other students, in this instance, these students

shared a focus that seemed to stem from their reasons for joining the military and the training they received while there. To separate and conjecture which of these had the most influence would be impossible based on a single focus-group discussion, but both seem to be main vehicles for participants' evaluation of Engl-101.

One way that instructors might address veterans' valuing of education is by talking to them about their progress in the course. If students disclose that they are veterans, it may be productive for teachers to ask them how their experience is going. This may help veterans since it shows that their instructors care about them. Caring was a trait that the participants spoke of highly. This is consistent with Angie Mallory and Doug Downs' argument that "being listened to, being asked for input, having time invested in them, and being offered transparency" may build trust, in that "feedback demonstrates to veterans how their instructors value them" (69). Even if there are no self-identified veterans, instructors may ask students to write a mini-evaluation of the class at various points in the semester, allowing them to adjust their teaching strategy to the needs of the students.

#### *Frustration with Traditional/Non-military Students*

Teachers of Engl-101 will need to consider how to respond to the actions of their non-military students since it reportedly impacts veterans' behavior in the class. In order to quell veterans' frustration with non-military students' behavior, participants suggested that instructors intervene. This could be to encourage students to participate when they aren't or to call out inappropriate behavior like texting. As Mallory and Downs argue that "Veterans treat instructors as superiors requiring deference" (66), it is important that instructors realize that this cultural value may influence veterans' perceptions of the way non-military students act around

instructors, which may also affect veterans' ability to engage in class. Many of the participants felt obligated to step-up their participation, on behalf of the other students, to carry discussion or complete a group activity. Although it was not explicitly stated, with the way veterans described their actions as helping to "carry" the class, it seems reasonable to assume that this perceived obligation stems from the aforementioned desire that they had for class to be productive. When class wasn't productive, they felt compelled to help everyone else. They were also used to picking up slack in their military experience. Justin<sup>8</sup> told me in the follow-up interview that he was used to a culture where "wearing the wrong shirt" was considered equivalent to killing someone – it just shouldn't be done. Perfection, in every action, was expected. Although Justin's experience is limited to being in the Marines, it illustrates the point. When students' actions weren't reaching the participants' expectations, they stepped up. Sometimes the participants felt that stepping up all the time was annoying, but they also felt like they were helping lead the class while getting the most that they could get out of the experience. Despite the deeply-rooted frustration that the participants had with non-military students, they also expressed an understanding that these students couldn't necessarily change. They weren't particularly happy about this fact, but they did expect teachers to do more leading than they felt like they did.

Frustration with non-military students that had just graduated high school was one of the most discussed topics in the focus group and the follow-up interview, for a variety of reasons. The predominate reason for veterans taking issue with non-military students' behavior was that it didn't align with the expectations of behavior that they had in the military, which is consistent with the findings of other research (Doe and Langstraat 3; Holladay 376; Wheeler 784). This was one of the reasons that veterans suggested that a veterans-only section of Engl-101 would be

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<sup>8</sup> All names used for the participants are pseudonyms.

useful since the students would come from a similar background and would possess similar expectations. Much of the frustration was due to what the participants perceived as “disrespectful behavior,” which was behavior that the participants often referenced as being disrespectful in military contexts. Disrespect was noted in two main ways. The first was that many of the non-veteran students did not do their homework, thus altering the plans that the instructors had for that day. Because many of the veterans expected the class period to help them work specifically towards writing the major essays, this lack of preparation was seen as disrespectful to the instructor and to the rest of the class. They felt that their progress in the class, and the progress of the other students, was limited by this behavior. The second cause for frustration was that non-military students frequently used their phones and computers for things unrelated to class work – an action prohibited by the standardized syllabus (Appendix C). This behavior was frustrating to participants for a number of reasons. On one hand, they saw it as a blatant violation of course policy, which went against their expectations that rules, structure, and orders should be followed. This was an expectation that likely stemmed from their military service (Ackerman, DiRamio, and Mitchell 12; Mallory and Downs 63). On the other hand, many of the participants found themselves hyper-aware of these student behaviors, which prevented them from engaging in what the instructor was trying to teach.

### *Desire for Structure and Order*

Instructors may need to consider avoiding the use of class discussions and activities without some clear guidelines, perhaps even requiring everyone to speak at least once or something else of that ilk. Additionally, instructors will likely need to consider the wording of their policies so that they describe exactly what practices will be followed, so that veterans know

what to expect. As was repeatedly discussed in the focus group and in the follow-interview, the participants noted that they appreciated “structure” and order within the class. The desire for structure seems to be linked to their experience in the military where appropriate behaviors were prescribed and detailed – an experience that is often initially expected when entering college (Mallory and Downs 59). The participants’ desire seemed to be predominately focused on two things: adherence to course policies and structured lesson plans. When the participants expressed their frustration with students violating the course policy on phone usage, it was typically connected to their instructors not exercising their authority to reprimand or kick out those students. If there is a clearly stated policy in the syllabus, it is likely that veterans will expect it to be followed. Likewise, without a clearly defined structure for going through a lesson, the participants indicated that they felt like their time was being wasted. Although their idea of “structure” was never clearly defined, the participants seemed to mean in it terms of productivity. Without structure, there was no goal to work towards. They wanted a clear goal for the class period and they wanted everyone to be involved, which is why the aforementioned issue of policies being followed is so crucial.

Teachers may need to consider the most essential elements of a lesson or a unit of instruction to make sure that veterans can get a handle on it in class. The participants requested that they be shown what to do, so there may be merit in instructors writing with their classes, showing them their writing process. Many of the participants had positive experiences with peer review and group work, but only when their instructors provided clear guidelines in class or showed them how to do the activity themselves. The more hands-on activities, the better. This style of teaching was attributed to experiences in the military by some of the participants. This seemed paradoxical to some of the participants’ claims that they could learn better on their own



outside of class when their instructors were “spoon-feeding” the class. The desire for more in-class practice may be due to their desire to actively work on the required papers, so time in class where they weren’t doing “hands-on” work typically felt like “spoon-feeding.” This claim is made in light of the fact that most of the veterans acknowledge that the most, if not all of their learning occurred in the classroom. They couldn’t remember what they did outside of class.

### *Desire for an Authoritative Instructor*

Despite the fact that there is an intensive, nine-day workshop for incoming that Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) and a required course, Teaching College Composition, to prepare them for the rigors of teaching Engl-101, more emphasis may need to be placed on using authority in class. Although it was expressed that Engl-101 should be taught by a professor, it is financially impossible for this institution. Considering GTAs teach Engl-101, it may be hard for them to demonstrate the authority that the veterans expect. Moreover, many of the GTAs have not had prior teaching experience, so their time in the classroom is new to them.

Participants expected instructors of Engl-101 to show authority in the classroom because they are used to authoritative leaders in the military. Using authority, according to the participants, should come primarily through the instructor consistently enforcing the rules for the course. The participants wanted instructors that cared for their students, and the enforcement of rules was one way that instructors could show that. Many of the participants noted that their instructors didn’t tell students to get off their phones or social media when using a computer lab or tablets. The participants didn’t say whether this was because their instructors weren’t noticing the policy violation, or that they didn’t care about the violation. In either case, the instructor’s failure to enforce policies – and by extension, order – was the mark of a bad experience. Most of

them felt like their instructors only had partial control of the classroom, thus making it hard for them to focus on the lesson. As mentioned before, veterans would feel the need to do something about it. In the experiences of the participants, many talked with their instructors about their concerns – including that the instructors needed to show their authority. Some of the participants noted that the instructors followed their suggestions, which often made the class experience better for them. All of the participants seemed comfortable with sharing their concerns with their instructors because their instructors had shown them that they cared about their students.

Despite the negative feedback about veterans' experiences with instructors in the classroom, it was repeatedly noted that most of the participants had instructors that were knowledgeable about the subject matter and cared for the students. None of the participants indicated that they felt like their instructor didn't care about teaching the class – most complaints were ascribed to age and inexperience with teaching. Most of them noted that their instructors were prepared for lessons and were able to adapt their lessons when other students didn't do the required work. That said, when students wouldn't do work, the participants felt like their instructor was lacking control of the classroom. Besides the instructors' knowledge base in English, the participants also complimented the care that they had for the students. None of them indicated that their instructors didn't care for students. They also emphasized that they felt like they could approach their instructor with questions, as many of them frequently met with them during their office hours.

## **Question 2: What Have Veterans' Experiences Been in Working Towards the Course Goals for the Written Assignments of Engl-101 at SIUC?**

### *Moving from Military Writing Conventions to FYC Writing Conventions*

Instructors shouldn't assume that veterans – or any other students for that matter – know what might be considered basic aspects of writing for the course, like formatting a header in MLA style. Instructors would likely benefit from assessing their student-veterans' needs, especially since many of them may not even know what to expect since they are distanced from writing in high school. Instructors may also need to show and model the expected conventions for each essay. The participants emphasized that they still wanted to do the work, but that it couldn't be assumed that they knew how to use MLA, or that they knew how to structure a paragraph with a topic sentence and supporting evidence. Whenever they wrote the major essays, they found themselves returning to the conventions that they used in the military. Because of this, they may need clearer illustrations of the necessary conventions so that they can become a part of the academic discourse community. The participants noted that they were even far removed from an understanding of the basic parts of speech. Others noted that they were used to strict requirements for the genres that they wrote in the military. They were used to having specific directions for every aspect a writing assignment. Many of the participants noted that they wanted to know what kinds of information was necessary for each paragraph. They said that they knew the basics, but that they would like more specific guidelines, much like orders to help guide their writing, which is consistent with the findings of Mallory and Downs research “Uniform Meets Rhetoric” (64).

Writing Studies allows GTAs to revise and reformat the prompt to suit their teaching style, but some GTAs do not. Veterans are used to having clear and specific guidelines for any

assignment in the military, and the participants indicated that the standardized prompts – which all of their instructors used – were confusing to them. Because of this, it seems that either the current prompts could be revised to more clearly list the expectations of the assignment, or GTAs could write their own in a manner that reflects their specific expectations. Veterans may tend to expect only one correct way of completing an assignment. With the exception of the Literacy Narrative, veterans found the Advertisement Analysis and the Literature Review frustrating unless clear directions for each aspect of the paper were provided. They wanted to know what information should be in the introduction, conclusion, and each body paragraph for each essay. This was described as a “skeleton” or an outline. The participants noted that the prompts for these essays were unhelpful because they did not detail the specific expectations for that assignment. They were confused by the prompts as they are, which they deemed “useless.” Because of this, the participants went to their instructors for clarification. Most of them stated that they made A’s on their papers when they were able to receive clarification from their instructors. Their desire for clear directions seems to be largely due to their desire to fulfill of the expected requirements.

Participants’ military experience with writing, no matter how minimal, overshadowed their experiences in writing for Engl-101. Moreover, the distance they had from writing in high school influenced their writing experiences. One of the scariest elements of entering education after military service that participants raised in the focus group was having to write more than a page for the assignments. Eric noted that keeping writing and explanations simple was a value derived from their military experience. Either they didn’t write in the military, or they wrote documents that were less than a page and a half. Even the minimum requirement of three pages for the first essay, the Literacy Narrative, was intimidating to the participants. The short length of

the military genres participants had written often required them to write short and concise sentences. The goal of writing, for many of the participants, was to express a point in one, objective sentence. This convention was something that conflicted with the conventions of the major essays in Engl-101. What they felt like they could say in a sentence had to be a page in Engl-101.

The participants wanted the essays to be genres that they are more likely to encounter in the “real world.” In this sense, instructors and Writing Studies may need to seek to explain the practicality of the assignments in greater measure. Because of their experience with writing in the military, many of the participants wanted to see the direct, applicable value of each assignment in Engl-101. Few of the participants had experience with writing within the military with the exception that all of them had experience writing After Action Reviews (AARs). Additionally, what the participants all held in common with their writing experience is that it had to be clear, concise, and objective, while following strict guidelines, which is consistent with current research findings (Hinton, “Front” 268). They also knew the audience that was receiving the finished document. Whatever they had to write for the military, however, had to fulfill regimented guidelines. There was little room for error or failure to meet audience and genre expectations. Although they enjoyed writing many of the essays, they noted that the genres themselves wouldn’t help them in their field. They did believe that the class was teaching them important skills, but they wanted those same skills to be taught with genres that were more “real-world.”

### *Reflective Practices*

Offering opportunities for reflection allowed veterans to assess and evaluate their progression as writers, which also afforded them the opportunity to reflect on themselves as students rather than veterans. More reflective exercises could be used for that reason. One of the hallmarks of Engl-101 is the use of reflective activities – be it in essay post-writes or in the reflective introduction to the final portfolio. Participants revealed that reflection, or analyzing the past, was something that they were comfortable with, given their experience in the military. The aforementioned AARs required veterans to reflect on actions they had taken by answering the questions: What went well?; What went wrong?; What could be done better next time? Although AARs can be a short writing assignment of at least three points or a focus group, the participants indicated that they were comfortable with reflection, but not necessarily when it came to elaborating their ideas. Many of them said that reflection was helpful to them because they hadn't considered their writing processes before college. One of the participants noted that he used his portfolio after the semester ended as a reference for doing work in other classes, perpetuating the reflection well beyond the course's end.

### *Narrative Essays*

As past research has shown, narrative essays can be helpful to veterans transitioning from being a soldier to a student (De La Ysla 96; Holladay 374-5; Leonhardy 350; Martin 27-8). Narrative essays allow students to draw from their own experience and develop confidence as writers while also having freedom to experiment with language. Most of the participants started school immediately after they finished their military service, so having a paper that allowed for freedom to experiment with writing gave them confidence to keep going in the class. Although

the page requirement was initially intimidating, the participants noted that the Literacy Narrative was an excellent reintroduction to class. They liked the freedom to write about their experience while also not being constrained by new writing conventions. Many of them noted that they went above the required page length once they got past the initial fear of writing a document of three to five pages.

**Question 3: What Practices Could Be Used in and Out of Engl-101 at SIUC - As Well As in Other FYC Courses - to Help Improve Veterans' Experiences in Developing Their Academic Writing Skills?**

*Bridging Military Skills to Academic Skills*

The participants revealed that veterans tend to be used to working and learning with peers – isolated study was not something that they were used to. Because of this, instructors could seek to provide more group work in class. This could not only feed into the expectations that veterans carry with them from the military, but it could help them focus on being students and shedding their past identity of being veterans first and foremost. One of the most emphasized requests for improving Engl-101 was that more group work be implemented during their time in class. The participants saw that collaboration, even with non-military students, was a valuable way for them to learn the material and skills necessary for the course. Granted, they emphasized that these collaborative activities should be under stricter guidelines so that they didn't feel like they had to do everything for the group. The value of working together with non-military students was worth far more to the participants than the possibility of students being frustrating to them. This may stem out of their experience in the military to work together as a unit, but it also coincides with

the finding that they like hands-on practice. Working in a group allows them to practice what they need for the major essays while under the supervision of their instructor.

Another practice that instructors may need to implement to assist student-veterans is offering more lessons on reading strategies. Over and over again, the participants emphasized that they were skilled in “critical thinking,” “analyzing,” “evaluating,” and making “split-second decisions” when in the military. Despite these strengths, many of the participants revealed that they had trouble reading and evaluating texts. For some of them, they struggled to absorb the information because of disabilities, but for others, they weren’t used to the practice. They didn’t have to read much in the military, let alone academic articles. Because of this, it seems that teaching and practicing reading strategies with all of Engl-101 would be beneficial. As some of the participants noted, they were more than four years removed from high school and they didn’t remember how to critically think through a text, even though they possess valuable critical thinking skills.

*Show Me How to Do It, Let Me Do It, and If I Do It Wrong, Show Me How to Do It Again*

In addition to including more hands-on activities and group work, the participants noted that repetition and supervision were crucial. They wanted to do activities over and over again until they felt like they had mastered what was expected of them. Another request emphasized amongst participants was the desire to be shown how to do something, to do it in front of the instructor, and then to be reshown how to do it if they did it wrong. This military practice is highly similar to the pedagogical practice of scaffolding, which has already been noted in research as being an effective teaching strategy. Some of the participants emphasized that this was how they learned to do things in the military, so to go from a minimum of four years of that



style of teaching to being expected to do much of the work outside of class was a cultural shock. Many of them felt like their instructors expected them to learn everything outside of class, when they argued that they were paying to learn within classroom, which is consistent with the findings of Mallory and Downs' research (63). This seems especially important given that most of them noted that they didn't remember what they learned outside of the classroom context.

### *Using Models*

As noted in Chapter 2, the military emphasizes the final product of writing over the process used to get there. To assist veterans that come from this background, the use of models can be a helpful way to show them what they are working towards. Participants requested the use of more models, be it models of the major essays or through the aforementioned modeling of skills. Having some idea of what a finished product should look like was something that participants had experienced in the military. Without a model of a finished product, they felt lost. Given that they were far removed from the conventions of school, this desire seemed even more intense. They acknowledged that instructors might be worried about students plagiarizing or relying too heavily on models to write their own papers, but the participants argued that models helped them utilize their critical thinking skills. By having an idea of the end-goal of the assignment, they could devise a plan to address the paper.

### *Training GTAs*

Although it wasn't discussed for a long period of time, one of the first ideas mentioned to improve Engl-101 for veterans was to have some sort of training session for the GTAs. When I asked them what this training should like, they suggested just "a fifteen minute rundown" of

what to expect with veterans would suffice. They emphasized that PTSD should be explained primarily, despite the fact that it was barely mentioned in the entirety of the two-hour focus group. This seems to be connected with their desire for privacy. They wanted to be given privacy for being veterans, yet they also wanted to be treated as regular students. Many of them noted that even though the military was a major part of their life, they identified themselves as students first. At the same time, they noted that they still carried with them the experiences and expectations of the military, making them collectively different than non-military students. Because of this, they also suggested – perhaps jokingly – that GTAs should be told more about veterans so that they understand why they might yell at non-veteran students for being disrespectful. Little was mentioned about telling GTAs how the military affected their approaches to learning. It is also seems surprising that none of them suggested the GTAs be trained on how many veterans might want to learn.

Although time-constraints might be limited in PSW, it seems that GTAs might need to have a way to get information regarding veterans if they have one in their class. Participants didn't realize that GTAs do receive some training about veterans, which seems to indicate that instructors could have known more about how to interact with them. In years past, the pre-semester workshop (PSW) for incoming and returning GTAs included an hour-long presentation and discussion from representatives of the Veterans Services Office at SIUC. Recently, that training has been reduced to a 15 minute presentation, much of which covers the issues that veterans stated should be addressed during PSW. Additionally, an optional hour-long session was offered to GTAs that was more comprehensive. The problem with training GTAs is that veterans might not identify themselves as veterans in the classroom since they want to be seen as students.

## **Review of Findings**

The results of this study suggest that veterans, as a student population, have distinct needs, strengths and expectations stemming from their military service. Moreover, veterans in this study simultaneously see that they have unique needs and expectations as students – due in part to their experience in the military – while wanting to be seen primarily as students. There is no easy solution to that paradox, but the fact that the participants revealed that they had positive experiences both in the classroom environment and in working towards the course goals for written assignments is encouraging. Much of what the veterans requested to improve Engl-101 at SIUC is already being done, but what is being done could be improved. In addition, the findings of this study are similar with the findings of other research on veterans.

Generally speaking, instructors of FYC would benefit from knowing whom to contact for further information about veterans. Moreover, they could be offered training that introduces them to the cultural expectations that veterans often carry. It seems that more training for GTAs at SIUC may be required to help them improve their teaching practices for veterans, but it also seems that they can try to gather more information specific to the needs of their students from the Veterans Services Office and from the Writing Studies Instructional Mentors, who are GTAs that have taught Engl-101 in years past. The training that the participants want GTAs to go through is already a requirement in the English Department. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be an easy way to prepare GTAs for this unique student population that may or may not wish to be known as veterans. That said, the training sessions about veterans conducted during PSW do not concentrate on perceived deficits like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or traumatic brain injuries; they focus primarily on describing the cultural expectations that veterans carry with

them because of their experience in the military. Issues like PTSD are discussed, but they are not the sole focus of training.

The structure that is used to teach Engl-101 is fairly consistent because of the standardized syllabus, but GTAs may need to be more intentional about letting their classes know their teaching style and how they intend to structure class periods. For instance, instructors should let their students know if they tend to lecture more than they facilitate group discussions. Also, if GTAs have more liberal phone policies, they should make that clear to their students. Veterans may want to switch sections if they know up front the way in which a teacher teaches the class. GTAs are allowed to provide an addendum to the syllabus, which seems to be an appropriate place for instructors to explain to all of their students what their class will look like. This will benefit all of the students in the class, but veterans may be more at ease knowing what to expect.

Additionally, more time may need to be spent in training GTAs during PSW with regard to what each major assignment entails since one participant noted that even his instructor was confused by the prompt. Instructors – and the Writing Studies staff – may want to reexamine the design of the prompts for the major essays for all students, not just veterans. It may be that they need to be revised to be more approachable to students if GTAs choose not to alter the language to suit their class. Moreover, GTAs may also need to be more strongly encouraged to revise the language of their prompts to suit their class and teaching style.

In addition to revising the prompts, the GTAs may need more training in how to structure assignments and activities during PSW. Requiring GTAs to teach Engl-101 a certain way would work against Writing Studies' value of their autonomy, so perhaps the way GTAs introduce and preview the class the first week of the semester can be improved to help veterans find a section

that suits them. Additionally, the participants wanted a clearer understanding of the purpose of each class period and how it connected to the major assignment. If instructors don't have a clear understanding of this, then veterans may become frustrated and limited in their ability to work towards the course goals. Additionally, if instructors have a teaching style that is loosely structured, they may want to make that clear at the beginning of the semester so that veterans can choose to try to find an instructor with a more structured teaching style.

The findings of this study are broadly consistent with the findings of more recent research on veterans, both from the field of rhetoric and composition and from others. Because little research has been conducted to explore veterans' experiences in the classroom, it is hard to say that there is an exact correlation. This study was unique in that it focused on the institutional context where the subjects had taken FYC. The participants were able to describe their experience in direct relation to the course. Moreover, this study focused on what veterans' experiences have been in the classroom environment and in working on their writing while also allowing them to focus on what they believe to be important, which has been requested in recent scholarship on veterans. By asking broad, open-ended questions, the participants raised issues that non-military persons may not think to address. Using a focus group also allowed the participants to generate ideas together while also providing a wider range of experiences than an interview would. Most concerns of current research focus on topics raised by the participants of this study, which seems to suggest that scholars are raising the right questions to figure out how to better serve student-veterans. What remains is for more research to focus on the classroom setting, especially within the contexts of various institutions since this study provided only a limited view of veterans' experiences.

## **Additional Considerations**

### *What Occurred During Calls for Participation*

There were a number of observations that I made during the focus group and the follow-up interview that do not directly relate to my research questions, but are loosely connected and may be worth researching further. One of the participants noted during the focus group that he, and veterans in general, needed constant reminders about appointments. Most of the participants indicated a desire to be contacted frequently to help them remember. In this sense, those seeking to conduct research with veterans may want to consider contacting them frequently. When calls for participation for this study were sent out many veterans would respond, but one problem kept occurring – few would let me know their availability. When I scheduled the official focus group meeting and notified all volunteers, only three people had confirmed that they were available at the same time and would attend. Five out of ten total volunteers<sup>9</sup> did not respond. When the focus group began, one of the people that hadn't responded came. Additionally, one of the people that said she was unavailable attended. Their attendance may have been due to a felt obligation stemming from their experiences in the military. It also may have been because they forgot to respond or that their schedule had changed.

### *The Role of Writing Centers*

One unexpected topic that was raised in the focus group was the value of visiting the Writing Center. As participants noted that they liked hands-on work, collaboration, and one-on-one feedback, it makes sense that the Writing Center would be seen as a valuable resource to them. More research on the relationship between veterans and writing centers is needed. When I

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<sup>9</sup> During the course of the semester there were a number of veterans that withdrew their willingness to participate, predominately due to scheduling issues.

interviewed Justin, he said that veterans should be allowed more access to the Writing Center than non-military students. Essentially, he believes that more one-on-one instruction should be available to veterans because of their unique needs. Justin argued that the more one-on-one instruction available to veterans, the better. Whether such instruction was conducted in a class or by means of other resources available to veterans, like the Writing Center, this seemed to be one of the most significant issues to him. He felt that the Writing Center was especially useful to veterans, so he suggested that some sort of exception be given to them to have more scheduled appointments. Although this may not be feasible, it may be worthwhile to develop a scheduled time for veterans in Engl-101 to work together on their essays since the major assignments are standardized. Most of the participants explicitly stated that they used the Writing Center and that it was incredibly beneficial to their development as writers in Engl-101.

#### *Veterans-Only Sections of Engl-101*

Many participants expressed interest in participating in a veterans-only section of Engl-101. More research on this is needed because there is little out there that discusses pedagogical reasoning behind the usefulness of such a class. When this idea was raised in the focus group, four of the participants expressed an interest in that kind of class, while one of them said she didn't like the idea. Only one of them knew that we had offered a veterans section class in the past, and she had taken the veterans-only section of Engl-102. Unfortunately, because of a lack of enrollment, half of the veterans-only section was filled with Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) students who had not yet been accepted into the military. If there was to be a veterans-only section, the participants wanted it to be *all* veterans. That said, the lack of enrollment in the veterans-only section of Engl-101 may have been due to a lack of communication with veterans

that it was available to them since most of the participants indicated that they had no idea that the course was offered. If more veterans could be made aware of the course, more might choose that option. The participants indicated that they felt like the course would be useful in that the other students would have the same cultural expectations and experiences, but at the same time, one of the participants noted that she didn't want to be around just military students since she didn't want to be primarily identified as a veteran.

### *Training for Veterans, not Just GTAs and other Instructors*

It may be beneficial to develop and pilot an institutional training session for veterans starting college their first semester since the participants revealed that they didn't fully know what to expect when they started school. When I conducted the follow-up interview with Justin, we discussed an idea that I read in Holly Wheeler's case study on veterans in community colleges: offering training sessions or an orientation for veterans beginning their first semester of college (790). I told him this training or orientation could be tailored to the concerns expressed by the other participants of this study. Justin said that was a great idea – primarily because there is little training for the transition out of the military. He noted that he was given only a week-long class about going to college that the military described as comprehensive, but he said that it wasn't. Justin said that the class he was given didn't prepare him for non-military students' behavior or civilian culture given that he had been involved in the military for four years. He noted that when he left the military he was so removed from civilian culture that he hadn't purchased civilian clothes since he was in high school. He also had no idea how much people used their phones in and out of class, or how popular social media had become. Justin said that it



would be “awesome” if SIUC offered some orientation like Wheeler suggests so that he wouldn’t have been so shocked by the campus culture.

### *No Mention of Inappropriate Questions or Disrespect from Non-veterans*

A common theme in current research, as discussed in Chapter 2, was that students and faculty could ask veterans inappropriate questions or make ignorant comments regarding the military. During the course of the focus group discussion and the follow-up interview, no mention of this kind of behavior was noted. Granted, the participants felt like instructors would benefit from knowing a bit more about the way veterans like to learn, but no one remarked that they had been asked if they had killed someone or something like that. None of them said that they had been criticized for being in the military either. Although it is dangerous to say that the lack of evidence is a finding, it is encouraging that this was not an issue or concern raised by participants. None of them felt disrespected for being members of the military or for their service.

### **Possibilities for Further Research**

This study added to the growing base of knowledge on veterans in composition courses by gathering data directly from veterans regarding their experiences within the classroom environment and in working towards the course goals for written assignments of an FYC course. Moreover, this study offers rich, textured data since it focuses on the specific context in which the FYC course was taken by the participants. That said, as was discussed in Chapter 2, there is still very little research that examines veterans experiences in the classroom environment. There is also very little research that examines their experiences in writing for these classes. One of the

only empirical studies that I can find is “‘An Ethical Obligation’: Promising Practices for Student Veterans in College Writing Classrooms” by Alexis Hart and Roger Thompson, but it focuses on faculty and administrators’ perspectives of veterans rather than the perspectives of veterans themselves. Surveys directed to a wider range of veterans across institutions in FYC will be necessary to gain a broad, generalized understanding regarding their experiences. At the same time, it seems necessary that more qualitative research be conducted at individual institutions so that each can respond to the needs of the students that they serve. As was noted, many of the participants of this study were often unaware of the services provided to them and the practices used to aid them, which can now be addressed because of this research. As more veterans enroll in higher education, it will also be necessary to check if their needs are changing. It will also become increasingly necessary to discover how factors like branch of service, gender, race, rank, reasons for joining the military, socioeconomic status, and others affect veterans’ experiences in developing academic writing skills, both in and out of the classroom.

Additionally, little research has been conducted to explore veterans’ experiences with college composition. More research on veterans writing for FYC courses should be gathered to examine their writing processes. This could occur through case studies in which veterans would be interviewed and pre- and post-writes on their writing processes for assignments would be gathered, in addition to gathering drafts that they produce. This kind of research could help gauge if those that have served in the military have developed similar writing processes because of their experience.

## Conclusion

The overarching finding of this study is that veterans' experiences in the military influences their experiences in the classroom environment and in writing for FYC, making them a unique student population worth studying further, especially given that more are expected to enroll in upcoming years. The results of this study suggest that veterans are having broadly positive experiences in Engl-101 at SIUC. It is worth noting that the participants of this study spoke highly of their Engl-101 instructors because of two main issues: the instructors showed that they cared for their students and they had a solid understanding of the content of the course. Even when their experiences weren't as good as they could be, having caring instructors and faculty were crucial to the participants of this study. Moreover, the training that the English Department provides for its instructors of Engl-101 does a good job helping instructors have a solid knowledge base of the subject matter, which is very important to student-veterans. Because of this, continuing training and education for instructors of Engl-101 is paramount. Additionally, SIUC offers a veterans-only section of Engl-101, which was something that most of the participants of this study requested. Granted, there are veterans that do not wish to take such a course, but the option is available to them.

Although the results of this study suggest that veterans are having broadly positive experiences in the classroom environment of Engl-101 at SIUC, the practices being used to teach them may need to be improved. More specifically, Veterans Services and the English Department could establish a stronger of communication so that the English Department can improve the services they offer to veterans. This includes improving the training on veterans offered to Engl-101 instructors by discussing teaching practices that veterans prefer and expect. Likewise, instructors of Engl-101 may need to be aware of the kinds of writing that veterans

encountered in the military as much as they need to know the kinds of writing that students fresh out of high school have had to write. Moreover, instructors of Engl-101 may need to know how to implement practices that would bridge veterans' learning experiences in the military to their learning experiences in Engl-101. All of these points would contribute to helping instructors of Engl-101 introduce veterans to the writing skills, strategies, and conventions they need for college and beyond. Ultimately, these actions are not limited to SIUC – all English Departments should seek to communicate with the Veterans Services office at their respective institutions so as to better understand the veteran population they serve. They should also seek to provide the knowledge base that their instructors need to teach the content of FYC. Although there is still a lot that is unknown about veterans and composition, this study functions as another step towards serving them better as students.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

### Focus Group Questions:

- In general, what do you feel your experience in English-101 was like?
- In general, what do you feel your experience within the English-101 classroom environment was like?
- In general, what was your experience like in working towards the course goals forwarded by the standardized syllabus? (Show those goals to refresh memory)
- Did you encounter any challenges in the classroom environment? If so, what were they?
- Did you discover any personal strengths that you were you able to utilize in the classroom? If so, how did you do utilize those strengths?
- Did you encounter any challenges when trying to work towards the course goals? (Show those goals to refresh memory)
- Did you utilize any strengths when working towards the course goals in English 101?
- Do you believe, if at all, that your military experience influenced your experience in the English-101 classroom? How so?
- Do you believe, if at all, that your military experience influenced your ability to work towards the course goals? How so?
- Do you think there is anything that could be done to help improve the English-101 classroom environment for future student-veterans taking the course?
- Do you think that there is anything that could be done to help future student-veterans better accomplish the course goals?

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Follow-Up Interview Questions:

- Was there anything that was discussed in the focus group that surprised you?
- Was there anything in the focus group that you expected us to discuss, but didn't come up?
- Since you've had time to think about what we discussed, is there anything thing that you would like to add to what was said?
- In your own opinion, what would an ideal Engl-101 classroom look like for veterans? Could you describe it in some detail?
- In your own experience, what would be the top things that the English Department needs to address in Engl-101 to better assist veterans accomplish the course goals/succeed in the class environment?
- Training for GAs was mentioned in the focus group: What should this training include and look like at SIU?
- What are your thoughts about having a training session for veterans about to enroll in Composition I? If you think there should be one, what should it look like?
- Is there a question that I should have asked in this interview or in the focus group that I missed?

**APPENDIX C: ENGL-101 SYLLABUS****FALL 2013 - SPRING 2014 and SUMMER 2014 (if offered): English 101:  
Composition 1  
Course Objectives, Requirements, and Policies****DESCRIPTIVE OVERVIEW**

English 101 provides students with the rhetorical foundations that prepare them for the demands of academic and professional writing. In this course, students will learn and practice the strategies and processes that successful writers employ as they work to accomplish specific purposes. In college, these purposes include comprehension, instruction, entertainment, persuasion, investigation, problem-resolution, evaluation, explanation, and refutation. In addition to preparing students for academic communication, this core-curriculum course prepares students to use writing to realize professional and personal goals. Accordingly, class discussion and readings will address the function of rhetoric and of composing processes in a variety of contexts, with attention to various audiences. Throughout the course, while engaged in a diversity of composing endeavors, students will learn to respond constructively to their peers' texts and to use peer responses (along with extensive instructor feedback) to improve the quality of their own work.

**PLACEMENT IN ENGLISH 101**

To qualify for placement in English 101, students must have completed English 100 with a C or better or have elected to enroll in the course. Students should review a description of English 100 and the 100/101 Stretch Program. This information will help students identify the introductory composition course that corresponds to their interest in, their training in, and/or their facility with critical reading and writing. This information is available from the Writing Studies office (Faner Hall 2390).

**COURSE GOALS**

After taking English 101, students should be able to

- generate effective compositions using various methods for critical thought, for the development of ideas, for the arrangement of those ideas to achieve a specific rhetorical goal, for the application of an appropriate style, and for revision and editing;
- demonstrate understanding of the ways that language and communication shape experience, construct meaning, and foster community;
- analyze and describe rhetorical contexts and use such descriptions to increase the efficacy of communicative acts;
- analyze and use the forms and conventions of academic writing, particularly the forms and conventions of argumentative and analytical writing;

- produce texts that demonstrate an understanding of how purpose, process, subject matter, form, style, tone, and diction are shaped by particular audiences and by specific communicative constraints and opportunities;
- understand the importance of research to writing, explain the kind of research required by different kinds of writing, and compose effective texts by judiciously using field research, library resources, and sources retrieved from electronic media;
- employ critical reading and listening as forms of invention;
- efficiently compose reading and lecture notes that are concise and clear;
- synthesize different and divergent information, using the integration of information from multiple sources to engage in critical discourse;
- use Edited American English appropriately.

## COURSE MATERIALS

### Required Materials

- The package you receive as per your course includes the *SIUC's Combined Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing and Penguin Handbook* etext, *Mercury Reader 2013* e-text, *Mercury Reader 2013* printed text, and MyCompLabPlus access code. Here is more specific information regarding your texts:
  - Ramage, Bean, Johnson, and Faigley. *SIUC's Combined Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing and Penguin Handbook* (custom ed.). Pearson/ Longman, 2012. E-Text version.
  - *The Mercury Reader 2013* (custom ed), Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Fall 2013.  
Both the E-text version and print version are included.

To access your MyCompLabPlus account, please access your online.siu.edu (D2L) account.

- Reynolds and Rice. *Portfolio Keeping: A Guide for Students*. 3rd ed. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013. You may purchase an e-text or a printed copy, both from the bookstore. The etext is cheaper and can be downloaded to your tablet or other device. You can also go to the following website, [www.bedfordstmartins.com/portfoliokeeping/ebooktogo](http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/portfoliokeeping/ebooktogo), to purchase the etext with this ISBN: 978-1-4576-6766-4. You will not need access to any platform to use the ebook. Please be aware that you can download the ebook once to whatever computer/tablet to which you will have in class, but not to a cell phone. For more information, ask your instructor. This text is not included as part of the course fee.

- David Feldman. *Water*. Polity, 2012. You may purchase an e-text or a printed copy, both from the bookstore. The etext is cheaper and can be downloaded to your tablet or other device. You can also go to the following website, [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com), to purchase the etext with this ISBN: 978-0-0756-5658-8. The ISBN for the printed text is 978-0-7456-5032-6. Please note that you may have already purchased this book as the SIUC Common Reader for other classes, including Speech Communications 101 or University College 101. The etext is cheaper and can be downloaded to your tablet or other device. Please be aware that you can download the ebook once to whatever computer/tablet to which you will have in class, but not to a cell phone. For more information, ask your instructor. This text is not included as part of the course fee.
- Access to a computer connected to the internet
- An SIU email address, so that your instructor can correspond with you

### **Recommended Materials**

- A portable or desktop file case or an accordion folder
- A portable USB storage device
- A college-level dictionary

### **Accessing Pearson Electronic Course Materials: MyCompLabPlus, CourseSmart, and Etext Instructions**

Content from Pearson, including two etexts, is being used in English Composition I.

#### ***The Mercury Reader 2013 for Southern Illinois University, Carbondale* (etext)**

With your course fee, you will receive a printed copy of *The Mercury Reader 2013*, and in the book there is a code that you can redeem to access an eContent etext of *The Mercury Reader*. Instructions on how to redeem the code are written here and are also included in the printed book. You have two options for access. You can access the etext by either option or both:

**Option 1** – You redeem the code and create an account at the eContent site. Once you have redeemed your code and have an account, you will have a bookshelf that will have the etext of *Mercury Reader for SIUC*. From any device that has the full version of the Adobe Acrobat Reader (including the Dell tablet provided to you or from a PC), you can go online to your bookshelf at the eContent site and access the etext of *The Mercury Reader* online.

**Option 2** – You can download one time to one device a PDF file of the *Mercury Reader for SIUC* as long as the device that you are using has the full version of Adobe Acrobat and a full version of File Open. However, you must be online to open and access the PDF file downloaded to your device. The PDF is locked or secured and has digital right management protection (DRM), so it can only be opened if you are online.



In summary, you will have a printed copy of the *Mercury Reader for SIUC*. You will also be able to read an etext of *The Mercury Readers for SIUC* by going to your bookshelf at eContent. Finally, if you choose, you can download a PDF of the text one time on one device that you can access as long as you are online.

### **SIUC's Combined Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing and Penguin Handbook (etext)**

You have two options for accessing this etext, one within MyCompLabPlus and the other within CourseSmart. You can access the etext by either option or both:

**Option 1** – From D2L, you can access *SIUC's Combined Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing and Penguin Handbook* (etext) through MyCompLabPlus. Please follow these instructions:

- Go to D2L.
- Enter your user name and password and log in.
- Under “My Courses” (found in the center of the page), select English Composition I.
- Select “Content” (found in the top left of the page).
- Under “Content Items” (found in the center of the page), select MyCompLabPlus to access MyCompLabPlus with the Pearson etext of Ramage, Allyn and Bacon *Guide to Writing with Brief Excerpts from The Brief Penguin Handbook for Southern Illinois University Carbondale*.
- The MyCompLab version of the etext has rich etext features, including a strong search function. It, however, is not downloadable.

**Option 2** – From D2L, you can access *SIUC's Combined Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing and Penguin Handbook* (etext) through CourseSmart. Please follow these instructions:

- Go to D2L.
- Enter your user name and password and log in.
- Under “My Courses” (found in the center of the page), select English Composition I.
- Select “Content” (found in the top left of the page).
- If you want to download the Ramage, Allyn and Bacon *Guide to Writing with Brief Excerpts from The Brief Penguin Handbook for Southern Illinois University Carbondale*, you must select under “Content Items,” the CourseSmart platform of the book. **NOTE: You may only download the etext one time on one device.**
- In regards to print options, users are able to print the entire book if they choose to do so, but they can only print 10 pages at a time.

### **Technical Support**

For help in dealing with technical issues regarding your tablet, etextbook, MyCompLab, or D2L, please use the following resources:

*SIU*

Website <http://cte.siu.edu/d2lhelp/live-support/>  
 Email [mycourse@siu.edu](mailto:mycourse@siu.edu)  
 Phone 618.453.1024

*MyCompLab (Pearson)*

Website <http://www.mycomplab.com/support/student-support.html>  
 Website <http://247pearsoned.custhelp.com/>  
 Phone 800.677.6337

*CourseSmart*

Website <http://coursesmart.edusupportcenter.com>  
 Phone 866.588.3197

**COURSEWORK**

During the semester, your instructor will require you to write frequently—for a variety of purposes, for a variety of audiences, and in a variety of forms. Most of this work will provide direct or indirect contributions to the culminating project of English 101, the course portfolio (explained below). The portfolio will contain revised versions of your major assignments and an analysis of your writing and your communicative development during the semester.

**Unit Projects**

English 101 is divided into five units. By the end of each unit, you will produce a significant “formal” composition that is the equivalent of three to six double-spaced pages. For each unit, your instructor will distribute detailed assignment guidelines for the major composition associated with it.

Unit One—Literacy Narrative: For an audience of your 101 class, you will narrate and address the significance of an experience in which you learned the literate practices of a given field or community and, as a result, gained access to that field or community.

Unit Two—Advertisement Analysis: For a business audience, you will compose a report that evaluates the effectiveness of a given advertisement in the context of the magazine in which it appears.

Unit Three—Summary/Rhetorical Analysis: For an academic audience, you will summarize an article to be assigned by your instructor, as well as critique the rhetorical strategies employed by that article’s author.

Unit Four—Literature Review: For an academic audience, you will synthesize information from various sources about a controversial or debatable issue as designated by your instructor.

Unit Five—Reflective Introduction: With attention to course readings and activities, as well as to the contents of your portfolio, you will compose an essay, targeted for readers in English 101, that discusses your development as a writer during English 101.

Each of these texts will emerge from a process approach to writing, in which you engage in invention activities, planning activities, drafting activities, and revision/editing activities (including peer review). The formal composition for each unit and the materials used to write the composition will be submitted in a “working folder,” which is a folder that documents your work during a particular unit.

Format of Unit Assignments: All drafts of major essays for the course must be computer generated and submitted as both a hard copy and an electronic copy as directed by your instructor. The first page should be labeled with your name, the course and section number, the date, and the unit number; subsequent pages should be numbered and labeled with your last name. The pages should have one-inch margins. The text should appear in 12-point Times New Roman font. Multiple pages should be connected with a staple or a paper clip.

Submission of Working Folders: During each of the five units listed above, your instructor, on pre-determined due dates, will collect preliminary informal exercises (idea sheets, plans, drafts, peer comments) for purposes of providing you with some feedback, and he or she will keep track of your timely and engaged attention to these exercises in his or her grade book. At the end of the unit, your instructor will collect some or all of this material again as part of a “working folder,” or a record of your effort and development during the unit; thus, it will be imperative that you retain all informal exercises produced in the context of the unit. Failure to submit your responses to such assignments in a timely and thorough fashion relevant to their original due dates will result in a deduction from the unit grade.

The working folder for each unit will also contain a draft of the major assignment or essay associated with that unit. The entire working folder contents for a given unit, then, will be assigned a grade that ultimately will account for 10% of your course grade. In addition, your essay will be assigned an “advisory grade,” or an indication of its quality at the time you submitted it. The advisory grade placed on a unit draft will be an integral part of the holistic working folder grade. Indeed, it will be impossible for you to receive higher than fifty percent of the points available for the working folder grade without having submitted a *substantial* draft of the unit essay in addition to the informal assignments required by your instructor. (Important note: Because you will need to consult the working folder contents for all units at the end of the semester as you are assembling your portfolio and composing your Reflective Introduction, you will need to keep all the working folder contents from previous units in a safe, readily accessible place as you embark on each subsequent unit.)

If you know you will not be able to attend class on the day a working folder is due, make arrangements in advance with your instructor for a revised deadline and receive written approval of this deadline (which you must include in the folder). If your need to miss class is sudden, make sure that, at least, you have e-mailed your major essay assignment to the instructor in the specified format before the assignment is due. Never submit an assignment by leaving it on your

instructor's desk, giving it to your instructor's officemate, or slipping it under your instructor's door. Your instructor will not be responsible for receiving such submissions.

Late submissions of working folders without prior approval will be accepted, but submissions under these circumstances will result in a deduction to the unit grade. Any submission after the deadline on the same day will receive a five-percent deduction of possible points to be earned. Submissions on the next day (which starts at midnight) will receive another five-percent deduction. For each day that the assignment is submitted after the second day, the assignment will receive a five-percent deduction.

### **Informal Exercises**

In some sense, each unit project will serve as a model for the portfolio that you will submit near the end of the semester. The working folder for each unit will be a collection of your work during that unit (the major unit assignment and smaller daily assignments). Each working folder that you compile should provide evidence of your growth as a writer during a specific unit (much as the course portfolio will provide evidence of your growth as a writer during the semester). During each unit, you will engage in work that will assist in preparing the text that you will submit for review at the end of the unit. Often, these small assignments will constitute stages in your own writing process for a particular major essay, but they might include other documents such as a peer review of a classmate's work or a detailed summary of a reading. In determining the grades for working folders at the end of each unit, the instructor will "weight" exercises in accordance with their length and complexity. Though this course does not have a specific class participation grade, the informal exercises will indicate your level of effort and engagement.

In the case of unexcused absences, late informal exercises will not be accepted for any reason, and you will not be allowed to submit alternative assignments for missed work of this nature. If you know you will not be attending class on the day an informal assignment is due, you should email it to your instructor before the start of class (but such posts do not excuse you from any work completed during the class period). For excused absences of any nature, you will be expected to provide documentation if you want your instructor to allow you to make up an informal assignment. For planned excused absences, you must make arrangements with your instructor for doing the work before the established deadline or for a later deadline. (You must receive written approval for any extensions of deadlines.) For unplanned excused absences, you will need to provide after-the-fact, official documentation of the reason for your absence before you will be allowed to make up the work that you missed.

Unless you are given other guidelines by your instructor, the informal exercises should be neatly written or computer generated. The first page of the assignment should be labeled with your name, the course and section number, the date, the unit number, and a brief assignment title (such as "Peer Review," "Idea Sheet," or "Page 10 Questions"). Work that is not labeled appropriately will be returned without a grade. Multiple pages should be connected with a staple or a paper clip.

## Portfolio

This course has been designed to increase your ability to communicate, particularly in writing, by encouraging you to develop and then exercise a rhetorical sensitivity by which you identify the constraints and opportunities of any communicative challenge and respond appropriately. To improve this ability (which you already possess), this course is structured around a portfolio system, in which a large portion of your grade (fifty percent) is based on texts that you will be able to revise for much of the semester, drawing upon the rhetorical sensitivity that you develop, your instructor's comments, your peers' comments, and other resources that you might employ (for instance, the Writing Center). Near the end of the semester, you will submit your portfolio by gathering the graded working folder drafts of the essays that you have completed during the semester, and you will revise these to "presentation quality" texts. You will present both the original graded working folder drafts and the revised "presentation quality" drafts to your instructor (in a two-pocket folder) as evidence of your ability to write and as evidence of your learning during the course of the semester. This collection of rough and finished essays will be graded on the quality of the writing, not on effort. (Effort will be rewarded in the context of the working folder.)

As your instructor will have made regular comments on your writing throughout the semester (if you submit your rough drafts and visit him or her to discuss revision), he or she will read your portfolio attentively but no longer with the kind of attention that supports formative commentary. Your instructor will read these texts against a rubric, based on the course guidelines, to see if your work is rhetorically effective and indicates that you have achieved the communicative goals set by the English 101 objectives. In the process of preparing your portfolio for presentation to your instructor, you will be asked to compose a Reflective Introduction (Unit 5 essay) that comments on your development as a writer as evidenced by the other formal essays that you've decided to submit.

## Exam

In this class, you will be required to take a final exam during the officially scheduled exam period. The exam will ask you to generate an essay (employing strategies explicitly addressed in the context of English 101) on a subject to be announced near the end of the semester.

## Percentages

Unit 1 working folder (including draft of Literacy Narrative)	10
Unit 2 working folder (including draft of Advertisement Analysis)	10
Unit 3 working folder (including draft of Summary/Rhetorical Analysis)	10
Unit 4 working folder (including draft of Literature Review)	10
Unit 5 portfolio (including Reflective Introduction)	50

## Course Fee

For those anyone taking English 101 who has not been supplied with a University-issued tablet – please be aware that this course relies on e-texts. If you do not have a tablet, you will still need access the course texts as they are included in your \$58 course fee and are necessary to the class. The course fee gives you access to MyCompLab Plus and the *SIUC's Combined Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing and Penguin Handbook* for 18 months and access to the *Mercury Reader* etext for one semester. If you do not have a tablet, you need to bring the device on which you will read your e-texts to class with you. However, using a cellular phone to access your texts is NOT ALLOWED. If you would prefer to buy print copies of textbooks, doing so will also allow you to accommodate the policy of bringing your books to class. If you have any questions about any of these policies, please speak with your instructor.

In addition, please note that, as per the course fee policy, if you enroll in ENGL 101 again during a subsequent semester, you will be charged the 101 course fee again (see the Withdrawal and Repeat policies below).

## COURSE POLICIES

### Student Rights

As a student in this class, you have a right to the following: 1) to expect class to be held every day it is scheduled and for the allotted time for which it is scheduled, barring official University closures; 2) to expect papers to be graded and returned in a timely manner (usually within 7-14 days, including weekends and holidays, of the date that you submit the paper during the course of the semester for which you are enrolled); 3) to expect to be able to meet with your instructor during scheduled office hours, a schedule of which must be provided to you in class during the first week of the semester and posted outside of your instructor's office after they are provided in class; and 4) to expect to be treated with respect and professionalism during all interactions with your instructor and Department of English faculty and personnel. Also, please be aware that while instructors may provide you with an opportunity to submit your work online in a public forum outside of the closed class space, they cannot require you to do so. If you do choose to post your material online in such a public venue, you should be aware that the Writing Studies Office and/or Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities may need to contact any student whose work has been plagiarized by another SIU student in order to provide proof of authorship of said work. In this way, the posting of an essay online to a public forum could continue to affect a student even after the semester is over, if other students access and submit one's essay as their own. In closing, if you believe that any of the aforementioned rights is not being honored, please contact the Writing Studies Office in the Department of English in Faner 2390.

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the intentional use of another author's material and/or words in your own text without acknowledging that author's contribution. In academic environments, plagiarism is a serious ethical violation that carries serious consequences. Please read the sections on plagiarism

in *SIUC's Combined Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing and Penguin Handbook*. In addition to the standards regarding plagiarism addressed in this book, your instructor will hold you to some other standards:

First, as you are responsible for learning how to write effectively at the college level, *unintentional* use of another author's material will still constitute plagiarism. You are responsible for understanding the standards that will be taught in this class and abiding by them. If you are in doubt about a potential plagiarism problem, ask your instructor about the material before the assignment is due.

Second, make no mistake about the fact that presenting even "unpublished" material written by someone else (e.g., a paper written by a friend for English 101 or another course) as if it were your own work is an act of plagiarism.

Third, the use of texts in this class that you have written in the past or are writing during this semester for another course (the idea being to expand or rework them for submission in English 101) must receive written approval from your instructor. You should submit a copy of the text (or the assignment) to the instructor when you request the permission. In the case of an assignment that is being composed in another class during this semester, your instructor will request permission from the other instructor.

Ostensible violations of the plagiarism standards will be referred to the Assistant Director of Writing Studies. She will select an appropriate response in consultation with the instructor of record. Substantiated accusations of plagiarism could result in either a failing grade on the assignment, a failing grade for the class, or a referral to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities or the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts for possibly more severe disciplinary action. In addition, such cases will also be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, where the information will be placed on file for reference relevant to any future violations of the Student Conduct Code.

Please also note that assisting others in the act of plagiarizing by providing them with your own work to turn in as their own—and/or submitting your work to online databases from which students can purchase papers to turn in as their own—could be interpreted as an act of academic dishonesty and may be subject to disciplinary action under the Student Conduct Code. The code is available at [policies.siu.edu/other\\_policies/chapter3/conduct.html](http://policies.siu.edu/other_policies/chapter3/conduct.html).

### **Use of Turnitin.com via D2L Essay Submission**

Students will submit each working folder draft and the course portfolio to drop boxes created by the instructor for said assignments via the D2L platform. In doing so, students will meet the requirement to submit work to Turnitin.com. as each major draft comes due. The instructor will not grade or return a working folder or portfolio until the necessary essay or essays for the assignment have been successfully uploaded to D2L and thus Turnitin. A failure to upload a working folder draft or portfolio to D2L will result in the working draft or portfolio receiving a late penalty for each day it is late, as per the course's standard late penalty. Please see your instructor for more information.

## Course Attendance Policy

Excessive unexcused absences will prevent students from passing this course. Students who miss more than a total of three weeks of class (9 class periods of a MWF schedule; 6 class periods of a T/TR schedule) as a result of **unexcused** absences will be assigned an “F” for the course. While one day over three weeks (consecutive or not) of unexcused absences will result in **automatic failure** of the course, the negative effect of total unexcused absences under the three-week mark inevitably will be substantial in that:

- no in-class work can be made up without providing official documentation of the reason for the absence (unexcused absences will result in a “zero” for work completed during the missed class period);
- work that comes in after the due date as a result of an unexcused absence will receive a deduction in accordance with the late work policy outlined in the English 101 course description;
- lack of participation in classroom activities will negatively impact one’s level of preparedness for succeeding on the unit assignments and, ultimately, the portfolio.

Students who miss over three weeks of class as a result of **excused** absences (e.g., those resulting from extended illness) must obtain official documentation (e.g., a letter from a medical doctor) that establishes 1) the cause of the excessive absences **and** 2) the necessity for having to miss so many class periods. In the interest of organizing and expediting the documentation process, students who are absent for an extended period of time as a result of illness or other personal crises should seek the assistance of SIUC’s Transitional Services Office (453-7041).

Please note that neither early departures for holidays nor classes you miss due to your work schedule, lack of transportation, or child care issues will be counted as excused absences. Excused absences for weddings, funerals, court dates, and other such obviously compelling matters must be approved ahead of time by your instructor, and procedures for making up missed work must be formally arranged with the instructor. All absences that you wish to be designated as “excused” as a result of illness or an emergency must be officially documented. This documentation must be provided to the instructor no later than two weeks after the absence in order for the absence to be marked as “excused.” Therefore, if you are not feeling well enough to come to class and wish the absence to be excused, you will need to provide evidence of a visit with a health care professional.

## Tardiness

Unless excused by the instructor, an instance of tardiness or an early departure from class exceeding ten minutes will count as an unexcused absence. Unless approved by the instructor in the case of valid excuses, students will not be allowed to complete in-class assignments missed partially or in full as a result of being tardy or departing early from class. Chronic tardiness may be regarded as disruptive behavior (see below).



## Policy Regarding Cell Phone Use

The increased prevalence of cell phone use in our society has necessitated articulation of a policy for using phones responsibly in classroom settings. Any student who brings a cell phone—or other mobile communication device—to class is responsible for turning it off *before the beginning of the official start time*. If you are in the midst of some family crisis that requires you to keep your cell phone turned on, you must keep the ringer set to "manner mode" or "silent mode" and must alert your instructor before class about the situation. Doing so will minimize potential disruption as you prepare the instructor up front that you might need to take a call. If you need to take an emergency call, quietly leave the classroom and find a place where your conversation will not disturb others. Lack of compliance with this policy will be regarded as disruptive behavior, and violators will be subject to the consequences for disruptive behavior outlined in the following section.

## Disruptive Behavior Policy

Behavior that disrupts the educational environment in English 101 and that, therefore, interferes with others' learning opportunities will not be tolerated. Disruptive behavior in the context of the English 101 classroom includes (but may not be limited to)

- disrespectful treatment of your instructor or peers
- patterns of tardiness
- violations of the policy for responsible cell phone use

A student determined by his or her instructor to be “disruptive” will be referred—along with a report describing the offending behavior—to the Assistant Director of Writing Studies or her Administrative Assistants. A student in this situation will not be allowed to return to class until the offending behavior has been specifically identified and the consequences of repeating the behavior clarified in the context of a meeting between the student, the Assistant Director of Writing Studies, and, in certain cases, the instructor reporting the behavior. Following this meeting, repeated acts of disruptive behavior as identified by the instructor will result in referral to the Chair of the English Department, the Director of Students' Rights and Responsibilities and/or the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts. Consequences could include suspension or expulsion from the course.

## Use of Email

Students are required to check their official email address provided by the University on a regular basis and to respond to messages in a timely manner. This email address will be an official mechanism for instructors to correspond with students. Students should familiarize themselves with the complete Official SIUC Student Email Policy by visiting the website at <http://policies.siu.edu/policies/email.htm>.

### **Withdrawal Policy - Undergraduate only**

Students who officially register for a session may not withdraw merely by ceasing to attend. An official withdrawal form needs to be initiated by the student and processed by the University. For proper procedures to follow to drop courses or withdraw from the University, please see locate the following PDF: <http://registrar.siu.edu/pdf/ugradcatalog1314.pdf>.

### **Incomplete Policy - Undergraduate only**

An incomplete is assigned when, for reasons beyond their control, students engaged in passing work are unable to complete all class assignments. An incomplete must be changed to a completed grade within one semester following the term in which the course was taken, or graduation, whichever occurs first. Should the student fail to complete the course within the time period designated, that is, by no later than the end of the semester following the term in which the course was taken, or graduation, whichever occurs first, the incomplete will be converted to a grade of “F,” and the grade will be computed in the student's grade point average. “Incompletes” will be granted by the instructor of record in consultation with the Assistant Director of Writing Studies, and subsequent completion of the course will be governed by a contract signed by the instructor student to be approved by the Assistant Director of Writing Studies. For more information, please visit the following site: <http://registrar.siu.edu/grades/incomplete.html>

### **Repeat Policy**

Effective for courses taken Summer 2013, or later, an undergraduate student may, for the purpose of raising a grade, enroll in a course for credit no more than two times (two total enrollments) unless otherwise noted in the course description. For students receiving a letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F, the course repetition must occur at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. Only the most recent (last) grade will be calculated in the overall GPA and count toward hours earned. Students seeking to repeat a course a second time (third enrollment) must obtain permission from the Office of the Provost to allow them to register for the course. This policy will be applied to all transferrable credit in that only the last grade will be used to calculate grade point average. Only those courses taken at the same institution are considered repeats under this policy. See full policy at <http://registrar.siu.edu/pdf/ugradcatalog1314.pdf> (page 33).

### **Emergency Procedures**

SIUC is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Because some health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, SIU asks that students become familiar with the SIUC Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) program. Emergency response information is available on posters in every building on campus and in the Emergency Response Guideline pamphlet. It is also available on BERT's website at [www.bert.siu.edu](http://www.bert.siu.edu) and on the Department of Safety's website [www.dps.siu.edu](http://www.dps.siu.edu).

Instructors will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting their location. It is important that students follow these instructions and

stay with their instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency. The Building Emergency Response Team will provide assistance to the class instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.

### **Disability Support**

Disability Support Services provides the required academic and programmatic support services to students with permanent and temporary disabilities. DSS provides centralized coordination and referral services. Students who require accommodations for physical or learning disabilities should contact the Disability Support Services office (453-5738). To utilize DSS Services, students must come to the disability office to open cases. The process involves interviews, reviews of student-supplied documentation, and completely Disability Accommodation agreements. More information is available at [www.siu.edu/dss](http://www.siu.edu/dss).

### **Policy on Accommodating Religious Observances of Students**

Students absent from classes because of observances of major religious holidays will be excused. Students must notify the instructor at least three regular class periods in advance of an absence from class for a religious holiday and must take the responsibility for making up work missed ahead of time. Students should familiarize themselves with the complete Policy on Accommodating Religious Observances of Students in the Undergraduate Catalog.

### **Proficiency Examination**

In accordance with the University's policy of granting course remission for "academically talented students," the Writing Studies Program in the Department of English offers a test for proficiency credit for English 101. Credit is given to students who pass a nine-hour examination (spread across three testing periods), during which they must write in a variety of forms and thereby indicate that they have developed proficiency in the areas of written communication addressed in English 101, such as narration, self-reflection, analysis, and rhetorical criticism. To be eligible for this test, a student can never have enrolled in English 101 and received a grade (including a W, WF, PR, or an INC). Students interested in the proficiency examination should consult the Writing Studies Office Manager to receive specific information and guidelines concerning it in order to request approval from the Writing Studies Assistant Director to take the examination. The English 101 Proficiency Exam has three, three-hour components. The three components will be administered on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday during the first week of classes for the fall and spring semesters. For students who miss one of the first three sessions, a make-up session must be scheduled with the Writing Studies Office Manager, and must be started before 1:00pm on Friday. Students must arrive one half-hour before an examination period begins and may not enter the examination room after the exam start time. Students should bring a blue or black ink pen and photo identification (ID, Driver's License, etc.). Students are allowed to use a grammar handbook and a dictionary that meet the approval of the exam proctor. (Recommended texts are *SIUC's Combined Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing and*

*Penguin Handbook* and *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*.) Specific dates, times, and locations for proficiency exams are available from the Writing Studies Office Manager (618) 453-6811, or students can send an email to [English.Writing.Studies.Office@siu.edu](mailto:English.Writing.Studies.Office@siu.edu).

### **Saluki Cares**

Saluki Cares is an early alert initiative that seeks to develop, facilitate, and coordinate a university-wide program of care and support for students in distress. By working closely with faculty, staff, students and their families, SIUC will continue to display a culture of care and demonstrate to students and their families that they are an important part of the community. All concerns remain confidential. Referrals are made from faculty, staff, parents, other students, or by the student him/herself.

The Saluki Cares team can help students with issues surrounding, but not limited, to the following: deaths (other students/family members), extended illnesses, financial stress, adjustment issues, class attendance problems, homesickness, and other general signs of stress. For more information about the Saluki Cares program, please call the office at (618) 453-5714 or visit the website at <http://salukicare.siu.edu/>.

### **Inclusive Excellence**

SIU contains people from all walks of life, from many different cultures and subcultures, and representing all strata of society, nationalities, ethnicities, lifestyles, and affiliations. Learning from and working with people who differ is an important part of education, as well as an essential preparation for any career.

### **Learning and Support Services**

Help is within reach. Learning Support Services offers free tutoring in campus and math labs. To find more information, please visit the Center for Learning and Support Services website:

**Tutoring:** <http://tutoring.siu.edu>

**Math Labs:** [http://tutoring.siu.edu/math\\_tutoring/index.html](http://tutoring.siu.edu/math_tutoring/index.html).

### **Writing Center**

The Writing Center offers free tutoring services at the following locations to all SIUC undergraduate and graduate students and faculty. For more information about the Writing Center and to make an appointment online, please visit its website at <http://write.siu.edu/>.

### **Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity**

Our office's main focus is to ensure that the university complies with federal and state equity policies and handles reporting and investigating of discrimination cases. For more information, visit <http://diversity.siu.edu>.

**Morris Library Hours**

Hours vary daily, but can be found via the Morris Library website at [www.lib.siu.edu/about](http://www.lib.siu.edu/about).

**Morris Writing Center 453-1231**

Morris Library Room 236, Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

**Trueblood Writing Center 453-2927**

Trueblood Hall Lower Level, Sunday through Thursday, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Friday 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

## APPENDIX D: ENGL-101 PROMPTS

**ENGLISH 101—Fall 2013 – Spring 2014****UNIT 1: LITERACY NARRATIVE****Assignment**

As the U. S. grows increasingly in population, the need for *water* likewise increases. This current emphasis on conservation provides a timely invitation for you to compose a *personal narrative* about your own water literacy. For Unit One, you will write a narrative focusing on your experiences with, and the development of, your literate practices relevant to water. In other words, you are to write a story about how you learned behaviors related to water and what you learned from that experience. In addition, you are encouraged to consider not only how these behaviors and/or words may have affected you, but how they affect society, as well.

What do we mean by “water”? This may seem an obvious question until we consider the range of issues involving water: conservation, management, quality, resources, sustainability, pollution, scarcity, safety and/or disasters. One might argue that we are not born with an innate understanding of water management; rather, they become learned behaviors that require intentionality, the conscious or deliberate choice to speak and behave in particular ways that encourage positive interactions between people and water resources in the environment. That is to say, few of us are born with an appreciation for water’s significance in the makeup of the environment; this recognition must be consciously learned and cultivated, in order for us to become “literate.”

Commonly, the term “literacy” is used to refer to reading and writing abilities. Here, however, we more broadly conceive of the term as awareness and understanding of communication relevant to a specific situation or context. For this assignment, your “literate practices” are defined as your ability to recognize, learn about, analyze and/or communicate matters related to conventions of water management. To focus your essay, choose a specific situation or focal event that illustrates how you learned about, participated in, and/or analyzed behavior related to water management, keeping in mind that the term “water” encompasses a variety of experiences (e.g. a time you learned about conservation practices such as recycling, where you saw wasteful behavior, where you gained respect for a natural setting in the environment and recognized a need to protect it, etc).

Your English 101 class is the target audience for this narrative; proceed as though you are telling your classmates a story rather than composing a traditional, formal essay. As is common with narratives, your story should make use of a subtle thesis that establishes the significance of the focal event as opposed to stating the thesis at the end of the first paragraph or announcing it as the “moral of the story” in the narrative’s final paragraph. Be aware that a subtle thesis does not necessarily occur in one single sentence. Furthermore, it should relay the importance and meaning of the experience for you and/or for a larger community; thus, you should *show* your readers, rather than *tell* them, what new literacy you acquired.

For example, if your story of how you learned about water management relates to a time you helped to clean up a local waterway, rather than simply relating *what* happened (telling), you should explain *how* (showing), during that instance, you gained new knowledge or insight regarding your ability to negotiate the situation. Did you, for instance, gain a better understanding of how others treat their environment? *Show* how that learning occurred. Perhaps you learned to recognize and respect difference, or maybe you found a better way to react to wasteful behavior. *Show* your readers how that happened.

**Please keep in mind that you are not expected to (nor should you) divulge sensitive and/or private information about yourself or someone else. The general topic—water—is broad enough for you to select a focus that would be appropriate for an audience of your English 101 peers and instructor. If you have questions about the appropriateness of your focus, please consult your instructor.**

For model narratives that focus on water, refer to the readings in the *Mercury Reader*.

Suggested page-length: 3-5 pages double spaced, 12 pt. font, 1" margins

#### Genre

Personal Narrative; Creative Nonfiction Essay

#### **Working Folder Components**

A substantial draft of Unit 1 essay

Informal exercises to be specified by the instructor

#### **Portfolio Inclusion**

Optional

#### **Literacy Narrative Guidelines**

A. The completed narrative should be submitted in a file folder (your working folder) with (1) a copy of the assignment, on which you have placed your initials next to each guideline, thereby indicating that you have read the guidelines, (2) all the informal exercises required by your instructor for this unit, and (3) the peer review you received, along with any comments from your instructor. Additionally, email or post to Desire2Learn (as directed by your instructor) and upload to Turnitin.com a digital copy of your narrative as a rich-text-format (RTF) document; label this file with your first initial, your last name, a hyphen, and "Unit 1" (e.g., RSmith-Unit1). **Please note that a failure to upload a digital copy of your paper to Turnitin.com or to send a copy of the paper to your instructor through Desire2Learn or through email may result in your instructor counting your paper late, according to the late policy, until these procedures are followed.**

B. The narrative should explore an event that exemplifies your literate practices relevant to some aspect of water.

C. The narrative should have a thesis, which addresses the importance of this literacy event either for you personally or for people generally. Ideally, this thesis should be subtly developed (rather than explicitly stated).

D. The narrative should have a title and an introductory paragraph that promote interest.

E. The narrative should support claims about your literacy through vivid description and analysis of the focal event, the activity you took part in, and the people involved.

F. The narrative should have effective transitions (between sentences, paragraphs, and larger sections).

G. The narrative should be free of mechanical, grammatical, and usage errors. Pay particular attention to the following:

- pronoun clarity
- gender inclusive language
- precise language
- punctuation



## **ENGLISH 101—Fall 2013 – Spring 2014**

### **UNIT 2: ADVERTISEMENT ANALYSIS & EVALUATION**

#### **Assignment**

For this assignment, you are to assume the role of a contributing member of an RSO (Registered Student Organization) that promotes water's environmental impact on campus. The president of your organization, Justin Time, has asked you and the other RSO members to contribute to the development of a new campus community initiative advertisement encouraging water management behavior by evaluating effective marketing strategies. At this point in the campaign's development, Justin would like you to compose a report in which you (1) analyze how another advertiser uses visual and verbal rhetoric to promote water management in a particular media source, such as a magazine, a news media outlet, or a television network\*, and (2) evaluate how effectively the ad connects with that media's target audience. Your task, then, is to select an advertisement that promotes a particular approach to water management and to evaluate this advertisement based on your analysis of its use of visual and verbal rhetoric to connect with the target audience. Thus, you should look for ads that are environmentally oriented, such as, for instance, an ad from a local sanitation company encouraging individuals to recycle.

Suggested page-length for draft: 5-6 double-spaced pages, 12 pt. font, 1" margins. For further guidelines, see Advertisement Analysis and Evaluation Guidelines below.

\*Television advertisements must be accessible through Youtube or some shareable medium.

#### **Genre**

Analytical Business Report

#### **Working Folder Components**

A substantial draft of the Unit 2 report, with a copy of the focal advertisement and written approval of that advertisement  
Informal assignments as designated by the instructor

#### **Portfolio Inclusion**

Mandatory

#### **Advertisement Analysis and Evaluation Guidelines**

A. The completed report should be submitted in a file folder (your working folder) with (1) a copy of the assignment, on which you have placed your initials next to each guideline, thereby indicating that you have read the guidelines, (2) a copy of the focal advertisement in hard copy or via email from Youtube or another shareable medium, and your instructor's written approval of the advertisement, (3) all informal exercises required by your instructor for this unit,

and (4) the peer review that you received, along with any comments from your instructor. Additionally, email or post to Desire2Learn (as directed by your instructor) a digital version of your report as an RTF file. Label the file with your first initial, your last name, a hyphen, and “Unit 2” (e.g., RSmith-Unit2). **Please note that a failure to upload a digital copy of your paper to Turnitin.com or to send a copy of the paper to your instructor through Desire2Learn or through email may result in your instructor counting your paper late, according to the late policy, until these procedures are followed.**

B. The report should describe the ad so that your fellow RSO members can visualize it without seeing it. The ad *or* a color copy should be submitted with the report if you choose a magazine or newspaper medium. (If the original ad is submitted, it should be neatly mounted on a sheet of paper.) If your ad comes from a news outlet or a TV commercial, submit a functional URL from which the ad/commercial may be found.

C. The report should provide a clear and detailed analysis and evaluation of the advertisement. The report should identify the thesis of the ad and explain how the ad supports that thesis; the report should explain how well the ad persuades its audience to accept this thesis.

D. The report should support the analysis and evaluation with evidence. The support must be clear and logical.

E. The report should have an introduction that provides a thesis statement about the ad’s approach *and* effectiveness. The introduction should be concise, but it should be written so that the RSO’s members could read only that portion of the text and understand the ad’s approach and your evaluation.

F. The report should be divided into appropriate sections labeled with appropriate headings. Each section should have its own introductory paragraph that makes a claim, and each section’s “body” should support that claim.

G. The report should comprise sentences and paragraphs that logically develop your evaluative argument. The transitions between sentences, paragraphs, and sections should be clear.

H. The report should be free of grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors. Pay particular attention to the following:

- parallelism
- language precision, including verbs
- commas
- sentence boundaries
- paragraphing and transitions

## English 101 —Fall 2013 – Spring 2014

### Unit 3: Summary & Rhetorical Analysis

#### Assignment

For a general academic audience, compose an essay in which you (1) summarize one of the approved readings on water management and (2) analyze the rhetorical strategies used by the author to support her or his argument. Many of the essays you composed in high school may have asked you to read an article and to express your personal reactions to the opinions of the author. In contrast, a rhetorical analysis asks that you identify the *rhetorical techniques* that the author employs and to explain how these techniques seemingly support and/or undermine the author's apparent purpose(s). Your analysis might focus on the perceived effects of any or all of the following: rhetorical appeals such as ethos, pathos, and logos; elements of form; figurative language, vocabulary, etc.—basically any feature of the writing itself that might persuade readers to accept the author's ideas.

Suggested page-length for draft: 3-5 double-spaced pages, 12 pt. font, 1" margins

#### Genre

Academic Summary-Analysis Essay

#### Approved Articles for Summary/Analysis

Barlow, "Water Incorporated: The Commodification of the World's Water"  
 Ludlum, "The Climythology of America" *Mercury Reader*, Unit 3  
 Shiva, "Reclaiming Food Democracy" *Mercury Reader*, Unit 3  
 Carson, "The Obligation to Endure" *Mercury Reader*, Unit 3  
 Calvin, "The Great Climate Flip-Flop" *Mercury Reader*, Unit 3  
 Krauthammer, "Saving Nature But Only for Man" *Mercury Reader*, Unit 3  
 Arnold, "The New Wilderness Land Grab" *Mercury Reader*, Unit 3

#### Working Folder Components

A substantial draft of Unit 3 essay  
 Informal assignments as designated by instructor

#### Portfolio Inclusion

Optional

#### Summary and Analysis Guidelines

A. The completed Summary-Analysis must address an approved article from *The Mercury Reader*. The Summary-Analysis should be submitted in a file folder (your working folder) with (1) a copy of the assignment on which you have placed your initials

next to each guideline, thereby indicating that you have read the guidelines, (2) all the informal exercises required by your instructor for this unit, and (3) the peer review you received and all comments from your instructor. Additionally, email or post to Desire2Learn (as directed by your instructor) an RTF copy of the Summary-Analysis; label the file with your first initial, last name, a hyphen, and “Unit 3” (e.g., RSmith-Unit3). **Please note that a failure to upload a digital copy of your paper to Turnitin.com or to send a copy of the paper to your instructor through Desire2Learn or through email may result in your instructor counting your paper late, according to the late policy, until these procedures are followed.**

B. The Summary-Analysis should have an interesting title that identifies the subject and suggests a focus.

C. The introduction of the Summary-Analysis should have a lead that captures your reader’s attention and prepares the reader for the discussion. The introduction should be concise, but should identify the author, the text’s title, the author’s subject and thesis, and it should provide an encapsulation of your analysis. Your reader should be able to read only the introduction and know the subject author’s thesis and your overall assessment of his/her text.

D. The Summary-Analysis should clearly summarize the argument of the article. The summary portion should be concise, accurate, and should present the article in your own words.

E. The Summary-Analysis should clearly convey your analysis of the article’s rhetorical purpose, form, and techniques.

F. The Summary-Analysis should effectively integrate material from the article with your own writing. The Summary-Analysis should include at least one quote. The Summary-Analysis should distinguish between the claims made by the author of the article, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, claims made by you. The article’s material should be carefully attributed to its author, and the material must be properly cited using MLA guidelines.

G. The various points that you summarize should be effectively connected to your rhetorical analysis. The transitions between sentences, paragraphs, and larger sections should be clear and establish the relationships between ideas for your reader.

H. The Summary-Analysis should be logically developed. The rhetorical analysis of the article should be clearly argued, and claims must be supported with textual evidence that is properly cited.

I. The Summary-Analysis should be free of mechanical, grammatical, and usage errors. Pay particular attention to the following:

- clear use of modifiers
- effective incorporation of quotes, paraphrases, and summaries
- correct attribution and citation

## ENGLISH 101—Fall 2013 – Spring 2014

### UNIT 4: LITERATURE REVIEW (SYNTHESIS)

#### Assignment

Dr. Kenya Duwitt, the College Life Director at Tad Moore University, has been asked by the University President to prepare a presentation focusing on the issue of “Water Management.” In preparation for this event, Dr. Duwitt has asked you, one of her student workers, to gather and synthesize information on *some aspect* of this topic into a *literature review* that might assist her in locating a possible focus for her presentation. To help speed the process, she has provided you with a list of articles on the topic of water management (see below), but she also wants you to locate a few sources on your own. Dr. Duwitt has asked that your literature review take the form of an academic essay, and, therefore, she expects it to be written in a voice and style appropriate for academic exchange. In addition, she is careful to remind you that the purpose of synthesizing or reviewing literature is not just to inform, or to assert your opinion; rather, it is to present, based on the material you have read, some specific point or observation from all the sources about the focal issue. This essay should draw from a *minimum* of five sources (three from *The Mercury Reader*—see the list below—and two from credible sources of your own choosing and which are approved by your instructor). These texts must be cited and carefully attributed to their respective authors.

Suggested page-length for draft: 5-6 double-spaced pages, 12 pt. font, 1" margins

#### Genre

Literature Review

#### Focal Articles Provided by Professor Duwitt

Barlow, “Water Incorporated: The Commodification of the World's Water” *Mercury Reader*, Unit 3  
 Ludlum, “The Climythology of America” *Mercury Reader*, Unit 3  
 Shiva, “Reclaiming Food Democracy” *Mercury Reader*, Unit 3  
 Carson, “The Obligation to Endure” *Mercury Reader*, Unit 3  
 Calvin, “The Great Climate Flip-Flop” *Mercury Reader*, Unit 3  
 Krauthammer, “Saving Nature But Only for Man” *Mercury Reader*, Unit 3  
 Arnold, “The New Wilderness Land Grab,” *Mercury Reader*, Unit 3

#### Working Folder Components

A substantial draft of Unit 4 essay  
 Copies of sources consulted/cited beyond *The Mercury Reader* selections, with instructor’s written approval  
 Annotated bibliography  
 Informal exercises as designated by instructor

## Portfolio Inclusion

Optional

### Literature Review Guidelines

A. The completed Literature Review should be submitted in a file folder (your working folder) with (1) a copy of the assignment, on which you have placed your initials next to each guideline, thereby indicating that you have read the guidelines, (2) all the “informal” exercises required by your instructor for this unit, and (3) the peer review you received along with any comments from your instructor. Additionally, email or post to Desire2Learn (as directed by your instructor) an RTF copy of the Literature Review; label the file with your first initial, your last name, a hyphen, and “Unit 4” (e.g., RSmith-Unit4). **Please note that a failure to upload a digital copy of your paper to Turnitin.com or to send a copy of the paper to your instructor through Desire2Learn or through email may result in your instructor counting your paper late, according to the late policy, until these procedures are followed.**

B. The Literature Review should address the broad topic designated in the assignment prompt.

C. The Literature Review should synthesize information from at least five external sources, three from *The Mercury Reader* and two from credible venues of your own choosing. *The two self-selected sources must receive written approval before the submission date, and that written approval must be included in the working folder.*

D. The Literature Review should have a title and an introductory paragraph that promote interest.

E. The Literature Review should contain an explicitly stated thesis that comments on the current status of knowledge regarding the focal issue. That thesis should reflect your understanding of and/or reaction to current knowledge regarding the focal issue.

F. The Literature Review should provide adequate support for all claims about the focal issue and/or the status of knowledge on the focal issue.

G. The Literature Review should have a logical organization aided by effective transitions between sentences, paragraphs, and larger sections.

H. The Literature Review should demonstrate thorough, accurate, and stylistically effective attribution of source material (and should demonstrate the ability to use both attributive tags and parenthetical citations).

I. The Literature Review should be free of mechanical, grammatical, and usage errors. Pay particular attention to the following:

- citation of sources
- use of quotation marks

- attributive tags
- sentence boundaries



## English 101 —Fall 2013 – Spring 2014

### Unit 5: Reflective Introduction and Portfolio Assembly

#### Assignment

For an audience of college-level instructors and students, compose a Reflective Introduction for your course portfolio. In this essay, you will apply your understanding of rhetoric and your own writing processes to discuss (1) the texts that the portfolio contains (particularly the rhetorical choices that you made with regard to their initial composition, the revisions you made to them, and your reasons for including them in the portfolio), and (2) your development as a writer (or lack thereof if that was your experience in English 101).

Suggested page-length for draft: 5-6 double-spaced pages, 12 pt. font, 1" margins

#### Genre

Metacognitive Analysis

#### Portfolio Inclusion

Mandatory

#### Reflective Introduction Guidelines

A. The completed Reflective Introduction should be submitted with the course portfolio as an overview of the collection of essays and your development this semester. Additionally, the Reflective Introduction—and the other Unit Assignments in the portfolio—must be submitted in digitized format (RTF or PDF). See the portfolio guidelines for further explanation of the portfolio's composition. **Please note that a failure to upload a digital copy of your Unit 5 paper to Turnitin.com or to send a copy of the paper to your instructor through Desire2Learn or through email may result in your instructor counting your paper late, according to the late policy, until these procedures are followed.**

B. The Reflective Introduction should provide evidence of your acquisition of “content knowledge” during the semester. It should demonstrate your understanding of rhetorical theory and the composing processes.

C. The Reflective Introduction should provide evidence of your acquisition of “metacognitive knowledge” during the semester. It should demonstrate your critical engagement with your own writing process and your appreciation of how rhetorical theory applies to your own writing.

D. The Reflective Introduction should provide evidence of your facility with the level of written communication expected of college students. It should demonstrate your ability to make wise choices about how to frame your work for the intended audience.

E. The Reflective Introduction should have a title and introduction that foster the reader's interest.

F. The Reflective Introduction should present a clear thesis that conveys an evaluation of your work and development.

G. The Reflective Introduction should provide sufficient evidence from a variety of sources (assigned readings, drafts, finished essays, peer and instructor commentary, postwrites) in support of claims. These sources must be attributed and cited appropriately and accurately.

H. The Reflective Introduction should have a logical organization aided by effective transitions between sentences, paragraphs, and larger sections.

I. The Reflective Introduction should be free of mechanical, grammatical, and usage errors.

## English 101: Final Exam

### Fall 2013 – Spring 2014

For a general academic audience, compose an essay in which you summarize and rhetorically analyze one of the readings assigned from Unit 6 in the *Mercury Reader*. In this summary and rhetorical analysis essay, you should summarize the reading and then analyze the author's rhetorical strategies, as you did in Unit 3. When you analyze the author's rhetorical strategies and the structure of the argument, you should consider our discussions of rhetorical technique, particularly the three rhetorical appeals. This assignment is essentially a repetition of the Unit 3 assignment. Though the time constraints of the test will be taken into consideration, you are to compose a text similar to the one that you composed for the third unit.

To this exam you should bring the following materials:

1. a one page (8.5x11 inch) outline, which should be in sentence fragment form (though and introduction paragraph may be completely composed in sentence format)
2. a dictionary
3. your handbook
4. two or more pens
5. a sufficient amount of lined paper (8.5x11 inch) to compose your essay
6. a copy of the article

During the two-hour exam period, you will compose this summary and rhetorical analysis essay from the outline that you bring in (if you choose to compose one). At the beginning of class, your instructor will collect the outlines and spend five to ten minutes reviewing the outlines to make sure that they are in the proper format (i.e. that no outline is so developed in its structure that it constitutes an essay, as this test requires you to develop the essay based on an outline of its structure). Your outlines will then be returned and you will begin the exam.

### Guidelines

- A. The completed essay should be submitted in blue or black ink on lined 8.5x11 inch paper.
- B. The essay should have an interesting title that identifies the subject and suggests a thesis.
- C. The essay's introduction should have a lead that captures your reader's attention and prepares him/her for the discussion. The introduction should be concise but should identify the author, the text's title, the author's subject and thesis, and it should provide an encapsulation of your critical response. Your reader should be able to read only the introduction and know the author's thesis and your overall assessment of his/her text.
- D. The essay should clearly summarize the argument of the subject text. The summary portion should be concise and accurate. It should present the subject text in your own words. The essay should clearly analyze the author's claims and rhetorical techniques.
- E. The essay should integrate material from the subject text with your own writing. The summary and rhetorical analysis should include at least one quote. The summary and rhetorical analysis should distinguish between the claims made by the author of the subject text, on the one hand, and claims made by you, on the other hand. The subject text's material should be carefully attributed to its author, and the material must be properly cited using MLA guidelines.

- F. The various points that you summarize and analyze in this essay should be effectively connected. The transitions between sentences and paragraphs should be clear and establish the relationships between the ideas.
- G. The essay should be logically developed. The critical assessment of the subject text should be clearly argued, and claims must be supported with evidence from the text.
- H. The essay should be free of mechanical, grammatical, and usage errors. Please review all the mechanical and grammatical guidelines from past assignments, and pay particular attention to MLA format for citation and a works cited entry.

Timed Summary/Rhetorical Analysis Exam Readings

Kysar, "A Logger's Lament" *Mercury Reader*, Unit 6  
McKibben, "From the End of Nature" *Mercury Reader*, Unit 6  
Merwin, "Unchopping a Tree" *Mercury Reader*, Unit 6

## APPENDIX E: CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

My name is John Gund and I am graduate teaching assistant in the English Department at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) currently working on my thesis.

Paul Copeland has given me permission to send my research request via this listserv. This e-mail will only be sent out once more to request participation. No further contact will be made unless you choose to respond.

This e-mail is to determine if you would be willing to participate in my research study, which is designed to discover what veterans' experiences in SIUC's English 101 classroom have been. Additionally, this research is designed to discover student-veterans' experience in working towards the goals and objectives of SIUC's English 101 standardized syllabus.

I am gathering data by holding focus groups of 5-7 veterans that have taken Engl-101 at SIUC. Participation would only require attending one focus group session, which will last two hours. Each session will be filmed and recorded for thematic analysis. If you are willing to participate, please e-mail me at [johngund@siu.edu](mailto:johngund@siu.edu) with your name and when you took Engl-101 at SIUC. If you respond with willingness to participate, you will be contacted by me regarding potential dates for the focus group. Once a date is determined, you will be contacted again with information on when and where the focus group will be held. If you have questions about this study but aren't sure if you want to participate, you can email me at the same email address with your questions.

To participate in this study, you need:

- To be a U.S. military veteran
- To have taken Engl-101 at SIUC

Completion and return of the following information in an email to me indicates your willingness to participate in the study, which includes being filmed and recorded:

- **Name:**
- **When you took Engl-101 at SIUC (Semester/Year):**
- **Best email address to contact you at:**

We will take all reasonable steps to protect your identity. My thesis director, six or less graduate students who have taught English 101, my transcriber, and myself will have access to this data during the course of this study. All film and audio will be kept in a secure location after this study is completed. All reports based on this research and written by the researcher will maintain the confidentiality of individuals in the group. Only group data will be reported and no real names will be used. Since a focus group involves a group process, all members of the group will be privy to the discussions that occur during the session; therefore, absolute confidentiality on the part of the participants, themselves, may be difficult to ensure. Permission to use direct quotes attributed to fake names will be requested at the end of the focus group.

Upon completion of the research the audio and video will be kept for further research. Hard copies will be kept in a secure location. All digital files will be stored in an encrypted state on my personal computer.

Any questions regarding this study can be directed to me or to my supervising professor, Dr. Dively. She can be reached at 618-453-6844 and [rldively@siu.edu](mailto:rldively@siu.edu). I can be reached at 618-453-6823 and [johngund@siu.edu](mailto:johngund@siu.edu).

*This project has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Sponsored Projects Administration, SIUC, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533. E-mail: [siuhsc@siu.edu](mailto:siuhsc@siu.edu)*

## APPENDIX F: CONSENT FORM FOR THE FOCUS GROUP

I am graduate teaching assistant in the English Department at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) currently working on my thesis.

This form is for consent to quote what you said in this focus group session, but it will be attributed to a fake name to protect your identity.

This research study is designed to discover what veterans' experiences in SIUC's English 101 classroom environment have been. Additionally, this research is designed to discover student veterans' experience in working towards the course goals for the written assignments. This study may prove beneficial to SIUC's English Department as well as Veterans Services by providing insight to what veterans are experiencing in Engl-101.

I am gathering data using the recordings from this focus group and others. I will also be conducting follow-up interviews to gather information from individuals in response to what was discussed in the focus group. The interview would last roughly an hour. You are not required to participate in a follow-up interview. If you would like to participate in an interview, please let me know after the focus group so that I can write down the best way to contact you. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the findings, you may contact me with the information provided below. If you have further questions about the study, you may contact me using the same contact information.

All reports based on this research and written by the researcher will maintain the confidentiality of individuals in the group. Only group data will be reported and no names will be used. Since a focus group involves a group process, all members of the group will be privy to the discussion that occur during the session; therefore, absolute confidentiality on the part of the participants, themselves, may be difficult to ensure.

This research requires participants to be veterans. It also requires that participants have taken Engl-101 at SIUC.

Completion and return of this consent form indicates whether or not you are willing to be quoted using a fake name.

- I agree\_\_\_\_ disagree\_\_\_\_ that John Gund may quote me in his current research using a fake name.
- I agree\_\_\_\_ disagree\_\_\_\_ that John Gund may quote me in future research using a fake name.

The digital storage disks containing all film and audio recordings will be kept in a secure lock box after the completion of this study for future research. Digital files of the recordings will be kept on an external hard-drive in an encrypted state in a secure lock box. Any data used will be for the reporting of themes. In the case of quoting anyone, permission will have to have been granted (using this form) and a fake name will be used. These files will be accessible to my

thesis director, graduate assistants that have taught English 101 at SIUC, my transcriber, and myself. Additionally, I may collaborate with other professors in the future. The recordings may be used in further research for a dissertation and/or publication of future research. We will take all reasonable steps to protect your identity.

Any questions regarding this study can be directed to me or to my supervising professor, Dr. Dively. She can be reached at 618-453-6844 and [rldively@siu.edu](mailto:rldively@siu.edu). I can be reached at 618-453-6823 and [johngund@siu.edu](mailto:johngund@siu.edu).

I have read the material above, and any questions I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that a copy of this form will be made available to me for the relevant information and phone numbers.

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sign name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Any questions regarding this study can be directed to me or to my supervising professor, Dr. Dively. She can be reached at 618-453-6844 and [rldively@siu.edu](mailto:rldively@siu.edu). I can be reached at 618-453-6823 and [johngund@siu.edu](mailto:johngund@siu.edu).

*This project has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Sponsored Projects Administration, SIUC, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533. E-mail: [siuhsc@siu.edu](mailto:siuhsc@siu.edu)*



## APPENDIX G: ENGL-101 COURSE GOALS HANDOUT

<b>Course Goals</b> <b>(from the Fall 2013 – Spring 2014 common course syllabus)</b>	
Generate effective compositions using various methods for critical thought, for the development of ideas, for the arrangement of those ideas to achieve a specific rhetorical goal, for the application of an appropriate style, and for the revision and editing.	
Demonstrate understanding of the ways that language and communication shape experience, construct meaning, and foster community.	
Analyze and describe rhetorical contexts and use such descriptions to increase the efficacy of communicative acts.	
Analyze and use forms and conventions of academic writing, particularly the forms and conventions of argumentative and analytical writing.	
Produce texts that demonstrate an understanding of how purpose, process, subject matter, form, style, tone, and diction are shaped by particular audiences and by specific communicative constraints and opportunities.	
Understand the importance of research to writing, explain the kind of research required by different kinds of writing, and compose effective texts by judiciously using field research, library resources, and sources retrieved from electronic media.	
Employ critical reading and listening as forms of invention.	
Efficiently compose reading and lecture notes that are concise and clear.	
Synthesize different and divergent information, using the integration of information from sources to engage in critical discourse.	
Use Edited American English appropriately.	

<b>Engl-101 Major Assignments</b>	<b>Description (from the common course syllabus of Fall 2013-Spring 2014)</b>
Unit 1 – Literacy Narrative	For an audience of your 101 class, you will narrate and address the significance of an experience in which you learned the literate practices of a given field or community and, as a result, gained access to that field or community.
Unit 2 – Advertisement Analysis	For a business audience, you will compose a report that evaluates the effectiveness of a given advertisement in the context of the magazine in which it appears.
Unit 3 – Summary/Rhetorical Analysis	For an academic audience, you will summarize an article to be assigned by your instructor, as well as critique the rhetorical strategies employed by the article's author.
Unit 4 – Literature Review (Synthesis)	For an academic audience, you will synthesize information from various sources about a controversial or debatable issue as designated by your instructor.
Unit 5 – Reflective Introduction to Portfolio	With attention to course readings and activities, as well as to the contents of your portfolio, you will compose an essay, targeted for readers in Engl-101 that discusses your development as a writer during Engl-101.
Unit 6 – Rhetorical Analysis (Final Exam)	For an academic audience, you will summarize an article to be assigned by your instructor, as well as critique the rhetorical strategies employed by the article's author.

## APPENDIX H: CONSENT FORM FOR THE INTERVIEW

I am graduate teaching assistant in the English Department at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) currently working on my thesis.

This form is for consent to quote what you say in this interview, but it will be attributed to a fake name to protect your identity. All reports based on this research and written by the researcher will maintain the confidentiality of individuals involved. You may withdraw from this interview at any time before its end if you wish to cancel your participation.

This research study is designed to discover what veterans' experiences in SIUC's English 101 classroom environment have been. Additionally, this research is designed to discover student-veterans' experience in working towards the course goals for the written assignments. This study may prove beneficial to SIUC's English Department as well as Veterans Services by providing insight to what veterans are experiencing in Engl-101.

I am gathering data using the recordings from this interview and others. No further participation will be required. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the findings, you may contact me with the information provided below. If you have further questions about the study, you may contact me using the same contact information.

This research requires participants to be veterans. It also requires that participants have taken Engl-101 at SIUC.

Completion and return of this consent form indicates whether or not you are willing to be quoted using a fake name.

- I agree\_\_\_\_ disagree\_\_\_\_ that John Gund may quote me in his current research using a fake name.
- I agree\_\_\_\_ disagree\_\_\_\_ that John Gund may quote me in future research using a fake name.

The digital storage disks containing all film and audio recordings will be kept in a secure lock box after the completion of this study for future research. Digital files of the recordings will be kept on an external hard-drive in an encrypted state in a secure lock box. Any data used will be for the reporting of themes. In the case of quoting anyone, permission will have to have been granted (using this form) and a fake name will be used. These files will be accessible to my thesis director, graduate assistants that have taught English 101 at SIUC, my transcriber, and myself. Additionally, I may collaborate with other professors in the future. The recordings may be used in further research for a dissertation and/or publication of future research. We will take all reasonable steps to protect your identity.

Any questions regarding this study can be directed to me or to my supervising professor, Dr. Dively. She can be reached at 618-453-6844 and [rldively@siu.edu](mailto:rldively@siu.edu). I can be reached at 618-453-6823 and [john Gund@siu.edu](mailto:john Gund@siu.edu).

I have read the material above, and any questions I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that a copy of this form will be made available to me for the relevant information and phone numbers.

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sign name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Any questions regarding this study can be directed to me or to my supervising professor, Dr. Dively. She can be reached at 618-453-6844 and [rldively@siu.edu](mailto:rldively@siu.edu). I can be reached at 618-453-6823 and [johngund@siu.edu](mailto:johngund@siu.edu).

*This project has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Sponsored Projects Administration, SIUC, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533. E-mail: [siuhsc@siu.edu](mailto:siuhsc@siu.edu)*

## APPENDIX I: PARTIAL TRANSCRIPTS OF THE FOCUS GROUP

### Partial Transcripts

**NOTE:** The camera used to record the focus group broke the two-hour session into four separate videos. Below are the partial transcripts of these videos. The first 15 minutes of Video 1 were transcribed and there are minute markers noted throughout so that the quotes could easily be found. The rest of the transcripts note the duration of time in the video that it falls under.

Additionally, the names of the participants of this study are pseudonyms.

Beginning from left to right,

- Person 1 – Sofia
- Person 2 – Benoal Clendivious<sup>10</sup>
- Person 3 – Nia
- Person 4 – Eric
- Person 5 – Justin Case
- J – John Gund: Moderator
- M – Marshall Johnson: Second Moderator

### Video 1

00:00-15:00

J: So, um, the first question that I have is, in general, what do you feel like your experience in English 101 was like, just overall, your experience.

4: Overall it was really good for me, like, uh, the teacher was really knowledgeable, and about the course, and was more than willing to help if I had any questions.

John: Um, so in terms of that knowledge, um, is this just having a knowledgeable teacher was that a pretty big part of it for you?

4: Um, yeah, because I've had teachers before that weren't exactly like, they were doing it cause it was part of their contract, and they didn't really enjoy it, but he, like, knew about English and actually enjoyed teaching about it, so, he was really passionate about it, so that was a major part of it being really good.

J: You can bounce off each other it doesn't have to just be going back and forth.

5: For me personally, uh, dealing with the others students was a challenge, it was definitely an obstacle, just, I don't know if it was the mentally cause they just came out of high school, or because, you know, we came from such a structured disciplined lifestyle and now were in this chaos that's college. Um, but it seemed like everyone was on a different plane of thinking, and everyone was like always on their phones, and that's really distracting to me, and I find it super disrespectful. And so a lot of times it's not just that, maybe the way they'll talk to each other, just little things, that for the way I've come from is just like a lot of signs of disrespect. So I was getting blocked by that and constantly... If I was going to be poked by a stick all the time so I had to get over that before I could even focus on learning.

J: Okay, some of you were nodding your heads.

All: Agreed

1: Well, usually, like uh, the person sitting next me will be watching YouTube videos while the teacher is talking, which is very distracting cause yes, I want to pay attention to teacher, that's why I came to school, but at the same time, he's watching YouTube videos. Which, I think it's pretty funny.

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<sup>10</sup> I know this name seems strange for a study, but the student requested to choose his pseudonym. Justin made the same request.

2: It seems to defeat the purpose of being there.

4: Yeah, there was a lot of I think like you said, the “high school mentality,” of, “Oh, we’re free now; I can do what I want.” They were there just because it’s a required class and we’re really there to learn so...

2: It takes away from other people there who are...

4: Yeah, definitely. There were quite of few people that would like, come in late, always be on their phone, like you were saying watching YouTube, and I’m just like I actually want to learn and do well, so...

2: Yeah, we were in a class with computers and uh, many students were on, on, social networks and stuff like that. Not paying any attention to what’s going on and you can see that, that would bother me also.

3:19-

J: So just the act of seeing other students doing that, that was frustrating?

5: Not even just seeing; you know that it’s happening. You don’t have to see it to know it’s happening. So just knowing that it’s happening, that’s a road block.

4: Yeah, it’s kind of like, cause I really didn’t want, like I didn’t, I kept my phone off in my back pack; never used it. And all these people are like “Oh yeah, we have a tablet,” and I’m like “I can tell you’re not taking notes.”

M: Did it affect your ability to focus in class?

All: YES, absolutely.

2: It’s most classes.

3: Yeah, it’s like an itch you can’t scratch. For mine, because Engl-101 was like, I think, maybe my first class of the semester when I first got to this university. And I just informed the professor, I was like, “To get control of them they can’t look at their tablets or phones. I was like “They don’t pay attention to you.” And she was young, I think she was like a graduate student or something like that. So she listened to me and that got control of the class for that portion and then uh, I think she just made it more strict on attendance, because, uh, it was really annoying to see people come in and out of the class when it’s past time that class should have started. Or they want to walk in front of her to go to their seat. I was like “That’s disrespectful baby,” when they did that. So that’s how it was. Well, overall, I had a good experience in the class to go from not having really written an English style, MLA form-paper since high school, and I think it was like eight years difference between then and now, so I was glad that the first paper was something that a, for yourself instead of like a structured form.

4: Yeah, just like the first paragraph being the introduction of yourself, and everything. That was really good, like, unstructured but yet, kind of nudging you to getting used to writing in that format, it was really nice.

5: It did make that an easy transition for sure.

5:26-

J: The first paper?

5: Yeah.

J: Let’s talk about that further: what were the elements of that paper that made you feel like this is a nice introduction?

5: It gave us the free reign to literally, well, not “literally,” write anything we wanted. Within a framework you could do anything you wanted, so it was easier to take anything and just make it something, rather than have to take a proposal and then you know, something super-structured and it has to be “just like this and it has to be just like this and it has to work just like this and flow that way.” It was just much, uh, easier to just change those gears for like an academic setting, like getting back into writing papers.

6:06-

J: So, the lack of structure almost, was what was helpful? Am I hearing that right?

4: Yeah, because it was, uh, like you still have to do MLA format, but you pretty much just structure it as a story that you're telling about an experience you had. And so it was really nice, to be able to not have to be putting together a bunch of sources and everything just right but the experience you had. And then within the very general MLA overall format not really structure, there didn't have to be a thesis and a body and everything so there was a lot of free reign that you had in that first paper.

3: And it's cause it's over something you know personally, so everything will just flow for you, you really won't have much writer's block.

2: So kinda shows like uh what kind of writing style you had, more than if it's real structured.

J: So you liked kind of showing your own creativity?

2: More personal kinda, not just what you're writing about, but how you're writing.

J: So, let me ask this then. What was that transition like then to Essay 2 since we kinda talked about Essay 1 being a really good introduction. Was it a hard shift to go into Essay 2?

4: The Ad Analysis, that was interesting, cause well, it was more structured but not fully, because it was literally your take on an ad that you chose. So I chose like the Hardy's commercials and how they always like do all these sexy girls on cars, or in cars eating burgers, and just an analysis of that. And uh, it was really interesting to actually read into what they were trying to advertise in that.

3: Did your class have a theme when you went through 101?

4: Um, sort of it was based off the book which was Natural Disasters and ethical stuff, mostly Natural Disasters though, yeah.

5: My theme was Civil Rights.

Mutual agreement.

8:21-

4: But like, overall the book was supposed to be Natural Disasters and Civil Rights, we focused on Natural Disasters.

M: How many of you had a theme for your 101 course? All of you, what was your experience like with a theme in general edit structure in your writing and learning?

1: It was harder to connect a paper: you're write advertisements and civil rights, for me that's hard.

2: I had uh, Sustainability, it was, made it easier but I've had other themes that made it more difficult for me, it's something that I generally don't identify with.

3: My theme was Water, and yeah, it was weird. It was Water, but it like pushed the boundaries of your mind, and a lot of people just thought "water bottles" or "water the earth," but for me I picked like, something so different it was uh... For some reason at my house I get a lot of bridal magazines, so I wound up finding a gown that the picture was a lady in the ocean, and it was a Disney theme, so I was like "Okay, I'm going to use this," and I was just able to expand upon it, and then uh I liked the class because when we partnered up it wasn't with the same person every time, so I was able to help other people see something in their ad that they had missed, like to broaden instead of just thinking in the box.

J: When you say partnered up, what do you mean by that?

3: Like, to go over the papers, and to look at our ads, the professor had us partner up in twos and pairs, to go over each other's work.

2: Peer review.

3: Yeah, peer review, and we did it a lot for all the papers, I think that helped too, because then we had different drafts. I think we had like two drafts before going over the final one.

10:24 -

J: Was that, um, what was having multiple drafts like? Did you all have multiple drafts?

4: It kind of varied, I kind of just had one working draft that I would edit what needed to be, like I didn't print it out every time. Which was really nice, not having to print everything, uh, but I kinda had like, I just kept my laptop in class on the peer review days, and kind of typed it out and whatever the person doing the peer review or ideas I would just write them out. So kind of a working draft was really nice.

J: What was, um, since you brought up peer review, um, what was that like for you all in class. Peer review; because you said “kind-of helpful,” not only that you got to help someone else, but have instant feedback, what was the rest of your experience in peer review?

5: I wish mine was as good as yours, um, for me again that barrier of having to, you know, kind of get over that mentally and everything, once I got passed that it was, when they would review my paper it wasn't so much they were actually reviewing it; they were just reading it and they were like “Okay yeah, you missed a period; I get what you're saying.” There was really no review to it and then when it was my turn I would have ripped their heart out and showed it to them. So, for me, it wasn't very helpful at all. Maybe for them it was a little more beneficial, I didn't feel like I got anything out of it; like to the point where I almost feel like it was a waste of my time.

J: And peer review, did it typically take a whole class period?

5: Yeah, usually.

J: You were nodding your head that peer review was kind of, you wish you had her experience?

1: Well, it's not that I didn't have a good experience: there was only one student that would always help me, but we would also have to trade partners so I would never get him. So I wish the teacher himself would actually look at my paper before it was due so.

J: So your teacher didn't look at your drafts till the end?

1: No not till the end.

J: Okay, what was that did you have a similar?

15:00-17:30

5: For me, it depended on the particular paper, but if I had to follow like a general principle, it was: I would start with the material and then from there I would write the body; and then I would pull out the introduction and conclusion; and then after I'd written everything, I would find my thesis. Whereas, they try to emphasis start with a thesis, start with an introduction and then pull everything from that. I find that extremely difficult, um, but I just went ahead and spoke to my instructor and told her: “Hey, this is not working for me and can I do it this way,” and they were okay with that.

2: Yeah, I usually started with a, you know, an introduction and went straight to the sources. That worked for me.

J: So you were looking at sources and trying to pull some background information, okay.

4: Yeah, I usually did uh, a little bit of both: I found like the general topic; did like an introduction to the general topic, but didn't find the thesis; wrote out what I'm going to talk about and main points and everything; then found the thesis of what my overall writing was about. So it was similar to what they tried to have us to do to thesis, introductory paragraph and everything, but I had a little personal touch that I did. And my teacher was okay with it once I explained, like “Hey, I'm not quite doing the same thing,” but “Hey, it's working.”

5: Definitely lots of review though, I would write my paper, read it, correct it, then I probably went through a tree, it was ridiculous.

J: You had lots of revisions.

5: Absolutely, I mean I would find things that I didn't like and then I would ask other people on my floor, “Hey, what do you think?” People that actually cared to give me a review. And um, you know just kind of ask them for feedback, since you know, they are a lot better at it than I feel like I am, was at the point. And uh, it seemed to work out, it was very time consuming but in the end it worked, uh, I wish it would have been less time consuming but I don't I think that's just gonna come with time.

J: Okay, I haven't heard anything from you two on your writing processes, what were those like for you?

1: Oh, for me I would just start with the research itself, cause then I would get an idea of what I was writing about and then I would usually brainstorm different ideas and then put them together and then create my thesis.

3: Um, for mine, since my theme was Water there was a lot of push-back on it; everyone liked to complain about it, but I just embraced it and then I would kinda like push the boundaries of water. So one of the papers that I really liked towards the end I did it on uh like malnutrition [sic] of children, um in



developing countries, um because they have contaminated water that's why I think it was, uh, I don't know something like three in five children under the... three out of five children under the age of five died of that, of like diarrhea and all this stuff just because of contaminated water. So I would think of a catchy title first and then I can just build off of that.

#### 19:00-20:00

3: I used the Writing Center, so it would be fresh eyes, instead of just in the class.

2: Yeah I, I didn't do many revisions, I'm, um, meticulous right off the bat. I really don't have a rough draft. When I write it the first time, it takes me a long time. I make sure its... Going back and fixing stuff kinda silly, so I pretty much, uh, the first way I write it, it's the same way, I might fix the punctuation maybe a couple little words, but that's about it.

J: So you said, you go over it as your writing it, am I correct in that?

2: Like I don't really do rough drafts, even though it's considered a rough draft. Like I just make it like I want it and then I'll find, I'll try and find stuff I can fix later, cause your supposed to, so...

1: I probably like have maybe two or three drafts and I would use the Writing Center, I wish I would have utilized it more, but sometimes it didn't fit with my schedule.

#### 21:50-22:25

4: He would explain an idea and no one, like, no one would understand it, so I guess just having flexible teachers would be a requirement because not everyone learns the same or understand the meaning of certain things: that was a big deal.

J: So if your instructor hadn't been flexible, you think it would have been more of a challenge?

4: Yes, my instructor was pretty good about spinning something one or two ways if people didn't get it the first time so that was pretty good.

#### 23:00-24:30

5: Other than reading it on an electronic device. Not personally. I can't stand reading something on a digital screen, that maybe it's just like my own personal preference, but I have a really tough time reading digital print just cause its, I don't know it's weird.

4: Yeah, not always having access to the site was interesting if they assign like readings from the book and you only had a digital copy. It didn't always work.

5: Yeah, that's a good point the internet went down a lot.

4: Yeah, especially if you're on the schools Wi-Fi. Yeah, good luck.

5: Yeah, you're kinda just swimming up shit-creek without a paddle.

2: I was reading things over and over and over again, I lost uh, quite a bit of my attention span just reading. Uh. I don't know if it's because of PTSD or whatever the hell it is, I just had to read it over and over again to kind of comprehend, so uh comprehend or you're just dazing off...

5: Yeah I kind of had that problem too, I didn't think of that, Yeah, I'd have to read it two or three times just to understand what it was trying to say.

2: Sometimes you catch yourself. You're reading it, but you think it's something else, so it's like "Wait, I gotta pay attention while I'm reading it." So you read it over and over again sometimes.

J: So were these in-class readings, out of class readings, or what?

4: Both, we did a few short readings in class and we did also had a few days that were uh "I want you to have read this cause we're going to discuss it."

#### 25:00-25:50

3: It's a different feel, actually have a book you can bend, rather than just a tablet to hold.

5: That and these tablets made it really hard. These tablets were a failure. The project was not done very well at all, so that made it in itself kind of difficult to navigate through some assignments whether it was typing – cause those keyboards – or without the keyboard at all. I mean you can go to the library, yeah, but you can't be there all the time, so sometimes you're just sitting there with the tablet trying to use the

onscreen keyboard and all you can see is like an inch of text, so you're spending more time kind of scrolling around trying to figure out where you're at than you're actually wiring your paper.

4: Yeah a lot of my class had the tablets cause they were freshman, and most of the actually got the books as well cause it was free with tuition.

28:30-29:40

3: I told the professor at the end of the semester, cause I felt like it wasn't, I didn't feel like it was productive for me, but for the other kids it was that she had it set as if it was a high school classroom. That she taught it as that. So it was um, every detail she had to go over and everything like that, but it was good, she made sure all the students sat up front and not in the back, she didn't let anyone do that or listen to headphones. So it was good – she had control that way.

J: So your having an instructor in control was really helpful.

3: For that, but I thought it was unnecessary because we are already in a university they shouldn't act this way like they come and I see them, it's as if every generation of college student or university student dresses the same: they come to school in their pjs and their flip flops, and I'm like "You're disgusting. You should have took a shower. Brush your teeth before coming to class." I guess they just want that experience to just come "bummy."

2: They still got that high school, like I have to go, they don't realize this is all for them.

30:10ish

5: I got really lucky, my instructor was, I think she was really good, um, once I told her some issues that I had she immediately adjusted to it so for me it worked really well.

J: Issues in writing?

5: Anything, absolutely anything, and then even the way she, you know, like she would teach her lecture, it just clicked for everybody. So it was really what she was very able to present the material in a way that you get it the first time. I don't know, I just got really lucky with it so it's kind of hard for me to say anything, so I'm trying to think of something specific, the way that she. . . it's like she actually took the effort to construct the class before coming to class rather than just doing it on the fly like I see a lot of teachers and professors do. So I think that really helped out, because she actually cared, kind of like what you were saying about your instructor, they actually cared to teach well.

31:00-45:00

2: I was laughing, yeah that's uh, that's a good thing when they want to teach well, it's funny you have to say that's a, you know, that's a good thing, yeah, that's a compliment. Yeah, my instructor, she was a, she was a graduate student, she was very knowledgeable, um, she was younger, so most of the students, it was easier for them to talk to and she was more relatable which was like totally, and whatever, and all that stuff, like valley girl and whatever. I mean she was good at what she did, the only thing she did was like she kind of let the class run all over which was again, distracting.

J: Could you expand that when you say she kind of let them run all over her, what did that look like in the classroom?

2: I mean, if it was a smaller class, it could have been a lot worse if it was bigger. You know people on their phones, couple people on Facebook, people talking over there, people talking over here, you can't hear what she is saying, people don't really care, instead of trying to take control of her classroom.

J: When those things are happening, you all talked about the students being observed on their phones. Are these during times when the instructor is lecturing or during group activities? Like what are some of those settings? Cause I know that ENG 101 tends to have a variety of things, it's not just lecture based. Were any of those moments kind of more challenging than others or were they just across the board?

5: It was from start to finish, the only thing that would change was who it was that day there are definitely those who would do it regularly.

## Video 2

00:27-00:50

3: Plus, I was seen more as, I don't know I felt like the elder of the class, and every time she had something or a question, she'd need me to support her so she'd look over like, "You have something to say," like, "Oh, yes, here you go, I'll help you out," something like that, like I was a TA for the class. Shoulda been paid...

2:00-2:30

1: Every student in my English class was in Aviation too. And they were always "We don't need English in our program in order to become a pilot, so why are we doing this?" And teacher always tried to make it seem like "Yeah but, you're going to have to write resumes and you're going to need to know how to do this," and all that stuff. So most of the time my classmates they never were prepared for anything so every time lecture came he would pretty much spoon-feed everyone.

2:45-4:00

1: Not a really good class for me, personally I mean, I learned a lot, I learned how to write and all that stuff, but I could have learned that by myself not going through that class.

M: So if we were looking maybe at some of the course objectives do you guys feel like you learned that from the material that was presented in the class or writing and reading outside of the class where did the most of that come from for each of you?

3: I think mine was in the class, for 101 I don't remember reading anything outside the class.

5: I completely agree yeah, I feel like anything out of class really didn't stick.

4: Yeah, I'd agree, like the readings that we had were usually just for the discussion that were hosted in class, so you could do them and try to read and understand what he was talking about or you could have them spoon-feed you what the key take away points were.

1: For me I was actually prepared for class so when I would sit there it was like a review.

4:30-6:15

J: Taking a look at the course objectives: were there any activities that, it sounds like your classes is where most of the writing happened? Do you feel like there were any activities that your instructor did or strategies that your instructor used that really helped you get those objectives or one of those objectives?

5: I think out of every unit we did, I think it was Unit 2, Yeah, the Advertisement Analysis, yeah um, she brought in a bunch of different pictures to give us examples, and then did an analysis with the whole class multiple times to give us a perspective on what exactly we're supposed to be doing and it made it that much easier. It made it like butter, it was really smooth. Once you know, she did that three or four times, we just kind of picked it up.

4: Yeah, one of the key takeaways, that, uh, Unit 2 and on focused on was the rhetorical analysis ethos, pathos, logos. And that was just a constant, like every class he would talk about it and reiterate which each one was and how you should be using that in your papers.

2: I agree with both of those answers, also uh, keeping a bind, I mean uh, portfolio.

J: When you say portfolio, what was that for you? What was the portfolio?

2: It was all the papers, final drafts, and there were some of assignments in there as well...

7:00-7:40

M: What was the portfolio like as an assignment, was it helpful?

4: As an assignment? Not really, because literally all the portfolio was for my class was you take your final draft and you make any last minute changes you want to it, and submit it like three out of the four papers at the end of the semester and along with your reflective final. So it was just a conglomeration of your essays. So it didn't really do a lot.

10:30-11:19

3: At the end of the unit, find this homework, tear it out of your notebook and stick it in here, with your rough drafts and your final drafts.

2: And now that I think of it, that's all that she required, my teacher, required, also just put it in a folder, but I myself I grabbed a binder and put the plastic things on and did it right.

J: So I actually want to touch on something that you brought up, you said that your instructor asked questions. Was that in the feedback, like on your paper? Like the written comments?

1: No, like at the end of the portfolio, like at the end of the essay when we turn it in he would just ask questions like what did you like writing about this essay? What you didn't like? What could you do better next time? Stuff like that cause I never really think about it when I write the essay...

13:20-14:30

J: So, would I be wrong in saying that you all seem to really like, saying here's where you can take the next step, here's kind of the next... even if I got a hundred?

Agreement

J: Uh, I'm going to switch gears a little bit, um, where there any personal strengths that you felt like you were able to use in the classroom, um and if so how did you use them? So any kind of personal strengths you feel like you have, that you could just actually utilize.

2: Writing, that is one of my personal strengths is writing, it just kind of like flow.

J: So were you confident in your writing before coming to college?

2: Pretty much, I mean I didn't, I knew I needed to learn more structure and still learn, but for the most part.

5: I didn't know until my instructor told me, but apparently, once she told me I kind of figured it out, now I use it to my advantage, apparently writers have a really hard time developing this ability to make their voice heard in their writing, and being objective about it. I, apparently, I do that naturally and as soon as I saw that she noticed that I continued to do that and work on it a little bit. And that really worked for me because a lot of these papers you can't be you know biased, so it worked really well in my benefit.

15:00-16:30

4: Having a structure in my mind really helped me with all the essays.

3: I think sticking to deadlines was easiest for me, and also I had no problem transitioning from like writing a paper from first person to third person, I was always aware of my audience.

J: So you, was it the prompts once you got those okay, I know exactly what to do here, how is it?

3: I think for me, its natural cause I can write a paper, a lot of the students are stuck on I can't write a paper with out I in it, I'm like, "No. Do not write a paper with I in it." For me, it was natural I could do without it.

2: Obviously her leadership skills came in to play, during the course also, it was helpful I'm sure.

3: Yeah, I'm sorry, I'll never forget one girl, she was asking the professor a question I didn't understand what she was saying and I was like can you repeat that? Well, all I heard was her saying "like" out of her mouth cause it was every other word, and I'm like, "I have no clue what you just asked cause I'm making tick marks cause you say 'like' to much in your questions." So, it's like a different breed.

17:25-18:00

4: If there was a dead spot I would jump in and say what I thought on what he was talking about, so that's one thing that I do frequently, with all my 100 level teachers now.

2: Yeah, I make sure to give, you know, give examples of what they are talking about or ask questions that should be asked and stuff like that.

4: Clarification that they want to give, they're like hinting at, they want to clarify on this topic but they want someone to ask about it so, picking up on those hints and asking the questions.

21:10-21:45

4: At the same time, like you said, after a while it gets a little irritating to be speaking every single question.

2: Getting more out of your education than everybody else.

J: Did you feel like your instructor looked to you at all, in terms of...

1: Not all the time, sometimes I wouldn't pay attention either. So, sometimes he would and it would be just me and another student who had to lead through the discussions.

22:00-23:30

3: I think it helps because we're older and because we've had experience outside of high school, that's what the professors want us to talk about more about, instead of some kid, well back in high school.

J: Which was a couple months ago actually.

Everyone agrees/laughs.

J: So in terms of just your experience, um some of you are older, your experience in the military, how did that possibly benefit you? If it did, in the classroom? Or do you feel like that's the case?

5: It definitely, we're a lot more mature after going through different experiences and actually being older and having those backgrounds, going on different scholarships whatever the case may be. I think that we all actually value the education, whereas these other students just feel like well uh, "Oh, well, you know, the next step I have to do is go to school, go to college," so they don't really care, and so that's why they don't care in the classroom.

2: Cause we worked hard for it.

4: I definitely agree, uh, like I'm here to get my degree, like I know where I'm going whereas most of the freshman in a 100 level classes, are like it's a 101 class I have to take it before I figure out what I'm doing. Whereas I'm trying to, I'm taking 100 level, 300 hundred level and I'm like I need to get through this, and I want to do well to get where I'm going.

J: Hmm. So you said, you worked hard, that you all worked hard to get to it. What do you mean by that?

2: To get to school, you know, I take it that most of us are getting GI bills, you know it doesn't come from nowhere, we're busting our butts to get there.

24:20

1: I would have said something, cause I myself, come from a background that my parents don't have money and can't afford to send me to school, so the military was a way for me to afford school, and I work hard for it and I earn it, and I think that if people don't treat education the same way I do, I find it disrespectful.

31:28-32:50

2: During the course? Or before?

J: During, after anything.

5: I found synthesizing, very difficult, because for me, when it was described as be objective in your writing, well, to take a side, was already being biased in its nature, so I found it really hard to try and take two authors and then make them, you know, have a conversation through words, um, I mean I'm still kind of figuring that out. It's a weird process, but to have two authors, it's kind of alright cause when you have three, four, five, and now all of a sudden you're like, "What the hell is going on?" And you get lost in your own writing and you have to take a step back and then like reconstruct the conversation. Um, that was really interesting, and then to using the integration of information, and like even trying to carry their uh, like for them to speak it rather than just pulling something out of the paper and then quoting them, to me that wasn't enough to carry a conversation. You had to actually argue their sights, you had to actually be that person; that was kind of weird.

33:25-33:55

1: For me it was like really hard not to be opinionated about the topics I was researching, usually, I would pick a topic that was really meaningful to me and it was really hard for me to not be biased, especially with the uh, I guess the sources I picked.

35:30-36:30

4: It was most of the time about me and my experiences, so writing about one topic that I'm not necessarily fitted to and choosing a side and presenting it unbiased is interesting.

J: Did any of you others have writing in the military or none at all?

5: Not like this, they were more reports, or debriefs, that kind of stuff, like this is what happened this is why it went wrong, this is what could have gone better.

3: Action review.

4: So basically what we're doing here, you took this class or you did this event, what went right, what went wrong, what could we improve on.

### Video 3

00:30-2:15

2: I was in the infantry. We didn't barely write ever.

J: So let me ask this, so what was the adjustment from those military writing to assignments or projects, whatever you call them, to Engl-101, was it an abrupt shift, was it unexpected, was it this is easy, what did you take from that one experience to the next?

5: You looked right at me when I laughed, um, because naval correspondence, is so structured in what you're writing, it is, like this is how you write it, this is how you write it. And so, this is like there is so many ways to write each one of these, I'm so used to this absolute, definitive structure in how you're going to write a paper, to "Well, here you go, like okay, write a letter as a narrative." "Well what is that?" Like I didn't know what it is, I had to get over that, and I had to actually learn what those styles were before I could begin to do anything.

2: That's one thing the high-schoolers had on us. They knew stuff like this, I didn't know what the hell any of this is.

4: Yeah, like all the pronoun, verb, adverb stuff that was really fresh for them, whereas were like minimum 4 years away from high school, it's been awhile.

5: The vocabulary was really, uh, an adjustment too, cause you can't, well, you can but your vocabulary in the military is going to be much more crude depending on who your audience or would be, there's so many acronyms that you can't really use those. It was actually funny, a friend of mine, I sent them my first paper and they were like "What is all of this, what is all of this?" She even told me it sounded "completely military," and so I asked, "Well I don't understand what you mean," and she would take these words that are apparently military and then be like use this word instead, or this one.

J: Do you have any example of that, like military words?

5: Execute, to finish, to get gone, um, to accomplish. Something like that.

General laughter

3:33-5:25

5: So instead I have to be like oh, well, my job is this.

4: I mean, civilian equivalents to meaning.

3: Just like you asked them what a board was and it's a packet: the equivalent is like an interview panel and your resume.

J: See now that makes so much sense.

2: It sounds like business writing. I uh, it's like trying to use nomenclature in a regular conversation.

1: It was like pretty much like really short and to the point, so it was hard for me to like elaborate and make five pages long with my writing.

J: So you're used to be just being really...

1: Straight to the point. One sentence is just what I think about.

4: The shorter you can make it is better, versus, college, oh you need to expand everything to the full...

3: Make a sentence into a page.

4: It's like it depends on what field you worked in before, so in the military itself, or just in the army, cause that's where I came from, the writing styles like completely different, like being in a non-committed officer and having a higher rank they want you to use the army writing style, but when I switched professions, their like oh, well you're doing report writing now, it has to be like this, since I came from military intelligence short sentence there's no ands in any sentences like when your describing somebody's look. Black shirt. Period. Like that. Cargo pants. Period.

4: Black shirt, cargo pants, cap. Yeah, short and to the point.

#### 8:30-10:21

M: Would it be helpful to, a large amount of structure up front, or less structure?

4: Less, less structure, and I think it's easier to learn from your mistakes, so because we had free range with writing the first paper and then when it came to corrections and all that English jargon I didn't know like conjunctions and all that I didn't know, so then looking at my own to be able to highlight what each one was, was helpful. Cause if it was something you printed out and like "Oh, here's a sentence you didn't make up," [and] "Oh, I'm gonna forget this."

2: I'd say the same, less structure

4: I feel I do best with a mix of both, like here's a general outline of what it needs to look like, but you have free range to adjust it, like my teacher was like the thesis is supposed to be up front, but if you don't put it until the end of the first paragraph its fine: it's your writing style. So having the general, you know, your main point up front, or like having the idea of what you need in the paper verses the actual structure, just give them me requirements I need in the paper and I can write it out. Versus: thesis, introduction, body, body, conclusion... just tell me what needs to be in there and I can go with it.

5: For me, I needed some sort of skeletal format, like I guess is how I'd put it, I need to know, I mean I'm obviously going to have a intro, body, conclusion, but what specifically do you need in this intro, for this particular paper, or what do I need in the body for this particular paper, and once I had that, it was pretty alright, it wasn't that bad.

#### 12:30

3: Or have a prompt that's more relatable, maybe not have whoever, people in high academia come up with this jargon, have it be like a graduate student or something like that.

J: When you say jargon, is there anything that like you mean specifically by that?

3: Just the language would be something we would use in this day and age, or dry jokes like that just in case...

4: Like the dry jokes, or having it formal, like you're not talking to doctor here your talking to freshman and people who needs this course, make it simple.

#### 15:00-15:50

3: I prefer that it wasn't all veterans, cause there's a reason why I got out of the military: I don't need to be reminded of it, and hear talk about it like "Well, when I did this..." "Shut up, we're in a university now. I want to talk about university issues. That's back in the back. If you want to talk about it, go back." You gotta go past, get rid of the digital camo hats and all that.

J: So you don't think a veterans section would necessarily be. . . ?

3: No, and mine [Engl-102] was with ROTC students, so maybe it helped them see like, "We're real, ya'll not..."

2: A peek into their futures...

3: It'd be like "This shit is real."

18:30-20:30

5: I think something else that could be beneficial is um, at least for me personally, I know that coming straight out of active duty my body and mentally was still okay, I'm at work from this hour to this hour and then when I'm off work well, my brain shuts, off and I like go to bed or whatever, do laundry or just kinda... that's my day. Um, so when I go to class, it felt like they were just "Hey, learn this real quick from regurgitating on the board, and now that you're on your own time, learn it yourself." I feel like if there was more in class actually learning, occurring, um that would be way more beneficial.

M: A stronger mix of lecture, group, writing exercises... all of those things in class.

5: Yes.

2: I see the same issue in a lot of classes. When I got to the school I realized I could pretty much do all this on my own, I mean what am I paying all this money and you're telling me to go do something and I'm just going to do it myself anyway, I mean I want you to instruct me you know that's the reason I came into the class...

22:40

4: Yeah, I definitely enjoyed, like last semester I had Engl-101, I had Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 50 minutes, and it was like go, go, go, leave. And this semester I've got [Engl-]102 Tuesday, Thursday, and that extra 20 min makes a lot of difference.

23:40

4: There's always that one guy...

2: Talk about the military too much.

27:00-28:00

5: Just to get that grade.

4: Just to get that participation point.

J: You made a face when I asked that question.

3: Yeah, their experience is different from mine, cause I force others to give answers or I'll ask them questions to make their minds, like wheels turn in their mind and come up with something more in-depth. I'm not going to put it all on myself, I'm going to put information out of you.

5: I definitely tried that with some of these people, and they just didn't care, they just genuinely didn't care.

4: A) don't care, and B) don't have the stuff to pull out.

5: And when you were talking about the Ad Analysis thing, we had to do it outside the classroom, and so I tried you know, finding when everybody had free time, like "Hey, when do you have time after class?" or "When you guys done with class..." "Oh, I've got like this hour here..." well it conflicted with everybody else's times, well "What about this weekend? Do you have anything going on this weekend?" "Well, you know... it's the weekend..." that's literally what they told me.

32:20

3: She was a grad student, I didn't like that at the end of the semester, she told us like, oh well, whatever exam you gotta take, I didn't read any of that, I just bubbled it in and I passed. I was like f- you, why are you even an instructor, you should just be gone, how dare you even say that to us.

32:55

4: That's definitely, I had a big advantage that my teacher actually cared and knew stuff and was passionate about the English language.

2: It makes a big difference, in, you know, keeping people's attention, actually caring about the subject, you can see the instructor's passion and stuff.



34:20-36

2: It's supposed to be a given: they tell you what they're thinking, I didn't think I was going to be having to raise my hand, in college classes. That's totally ridiculous that you can't figure out how to speak after another person.

## Video 4

4:20-5:45

4: I think it's from the beginning, like somehow on their roster know like next to the veteran, to know that this student might have issues, or anything: may not come the class, or they have an outburst, at some students, yell at them, then "I understand why you did that." They'd be more understanding, it'd be appreciative cause some people are like "Oh you're a veteran..." "Yeah, I fight for the freedom of this country."

1: I'd rather them not know that I'm a veteran. A personal feeling.

J: Why is that?

1: I mean I did go into the military and I understand it's a big deal, how everyone identifies me, cause once I tell them I'm a veteran, they look at me differently: "Oh, you're the leader now."

M: You're still feeling your military life and your college life are different.

2: Some of us we don't really know, we don't hang on our military experience, we kinda, it's in the past, unless we're forced, you know, to talk about it, in some way we kind of just leave it and move forward.

4: Yeah, like it defines you, but it doesn't play a big part in your life anymore.

3: It's a character-builder.

4: Yeah, I feel like having a veteran, like having them know, like if you tell them it's one thing, but if they just automatically know they might just treat you different right off the bat, so...

6:20-7:30

2: Having PTSD, you have a lot of anxiety, and your sleeping pattern is non-existent, and all kinds of stuff like that so I mean, and that helps a little bit, they don't bring it up or anything like that. You give them a card, kinda explain a little bit to them if they don't have experience with it, and they kinda, well it's not the same as with Joe the nineteen year old who's always hungover and doesn't want to go to class.

5: I like that you brought that up because there's definitely a lot of situations where a veteran may need to just not be there one day, and they need to understand why, the instructor, or you know, there may be a situation where they need a little be extra here because of said history.

J: So when you say they might have other things going on what do you mean by that?

5: Um, if I have an appointment with the VA, I'm not going to class because I'm not going to wait another two months to get that appointment, um, so it there's some things that kind of they've got to prioritize some stuff.

8:45

2: Still doing their work, probably better than anybody in the class, you don't expect to get crap about that kind of stuff.

3: That's why I meant that the professors should know what students are veterans, or maybe the professors themselves need to be briefed to be informed, like veterans may be coming to your class and you may have to deal with such, such, such...

9:50

3: Then you don't have to give the rundown yourself, I most definitely don't tell the professor.

2: It's definitely uncomfortable.

3: That's whatever's going on with me, I'm just glad, whenever I write an email that I have personal issues, they're like "Can you expand?" No, it's a personal issue, mind your business.

## VITA

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